



I. Outreach



Commission Recommendations: The Commission remarked on a lack of focused attention on small farms and an attitude of indifference toward the needs of small farmers and ranchers.

The Commission determined that the establishment and continued support of farmer support networks, mentoring programs, and apprenticeship programs are critical for small farm and ranch operators to exchange information with one another.

Recommendations included the establishment of an administrator for small farms to provide a dedicated focus for small farm issues within USDA and intensified and targeted outreach, particularly to minority farmers and ranchers.

AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS

Since October 2001, agencies continue to reach out collaboratively to small, limited-resource, and minority farmers and ranchers, as well as to local communities, to ensure a better understanding of the programs and services that USDA offers. Such outreach efforts have enabled agencies to obtain a better understanding of the needs of our diverse customers, and will help them target programs and services to meet specific customer needs.

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

■ AMS staff delivered presentations about available marketing resources and technical assistance for small-scale, limited-resource and minority farmers at the following conferences/meetings:

- The National Nutrition Education Conference, which was held in February 2003 in Washington, D.C.
- The North American Farm Direct Marketing Association's (NAFDMA) annual conference, which was held in February 2003 in Charlotte, North Carolina.
- "Opening Doors, Bridging Gaps—Minority Farmers Developing Leadership for the 21st Century," Vicksburg, Mississippi, that was held in February 2003.
- The Mississippi Small Farms and Marketing Conference that was held in March 2003 in Jackson, Mississippi.



- The meeting between AMS and 1890 land-grant institutions to discuss potential collaborative role in helping minority farmers which was held in July 2003 in Atlanta, Georgia.
- The Migrant Education Program sponsored by the USDA Small Farm Coordination Committee, which was held in August 2002 in Washington, D.C.
- The Supermarket of Ideas Conference, which was held in November 2002 in Norman, Oklahoma.

Additionally,

- In February 2003, AMS met with American Samoa government officials to discuss development of a new farmers market in the Fagatogo Territory of American Samoa. The American Samoa government has developed a comprehensive set of building plans for market construction, which were submitted for review. Staff discussed the design work that had been completed and shared experiences from similar projects completed in other urban communities.
- During 2003, a representative from AMS served as a member of the interagency USDA advisory board that provided assistance to marketing training activities of more than 300 Resource, Conservation, and Development (RC&D) Councils nationwide. As part of this interagency effort, AMS staff presented and disseminated information on AMS marketing and technical assistance resources to several hundred attendees at the national RC&D conference that was held in San Antonio, Texas, in July 2003.
- In September 2003, AMS initiated a cooperative research agreement with the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Mississippi State University to survey local growers about their interest in participating in a new farmers market in downtown Jackson, MS, and develop appropriate training activities that would help support the transition of local farm producers into direct farm marketing.
- In the fall of 2002 and the winter of 2003, AMS presented information on AMS marketing and technical assistance resources at several Farm Bill listening sessions held throughout the country for small-scale and limited-resource farmers. AMS staff participated in sessions held in Georgia, Mississippi, and Virginia.
- In October 2002, AMS staff spoke at two panel discussions offered at the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs Conference, which was held in Washington, D.C. AMS staff joined representatives from national, State and local organizations in discussions on “Partnerships That Work” and “Small Farm Initiatives.”

AMS also participated in the Small Farm Seminar for Hispanic Farmers that was held in May 2002 in Homestead, Florida. This workshop provided to Hispanic farmers information about various USDA programs and services, how to gain access to these programs and services, and how these programs and services can help to improve their farm and ranch operations.

- In July 2001, AMS staff worked with USDA’s Office of Outreach, other Departmental agencies, Alcorn State University, Fort Valley State University, Southern University and A&M



College, and Tuskegee University to organize and participate in the Natural Resources and Agricultural Workshop held July 11-13, 2001, in Perry, Georgia. This workshop focused upon community-based approaches and new technologies for small and limited resource farmers and farm workers, producers, and woodlot owners in the southeastern states. Workshop highlights included question and answer sessions with agency representatives, tours of successful demonstration projects, and visits to USDA research facilities.

AMS staff also attended the Seventh Annual National Forum on Agriculture Education in Urban Schools, September 26-28, 2001, in Miami, Florida. This forum featured educational sessions and presentations to students about agriculture. Highlights included presentations by the Colleges of Agricultural Sciences from the University of Florida and Florida A&M University and tours of Miami-Dade County agricultural area.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

As part of the USDA's Marketing and Regulatory Programs budget crosscut, APHIS accounts for the actual dollars and percentage of individual line-item programs that impact small farms, including emergency programs. This initiative began in FY 1999 and allows the Agency to accurately identify funds devoted to activities that directly benefit small farms. APHIS delivers service in two primary fashions, either through compensation payments to farmers or through delivery of technical support. The amount of APHIS' budget that directly impacted small farmers and ranchers was in excess of \$373 million in FY 2002 and over \$510 million in FY 2003. This represents approximately 48 percent of the FY 2002 budget and 44 percent of the FY 2003 budget.

■ Exotic Newcastle disease (END) is an example of APHIS' commitment to support small farmers. END was first confirmed in backyard poultry in southern California in October 2002 and in commercial poultry in December 2002. It was later identified in Nevada and Arizona in January and February 2003, respectively.

In April of 2003, the disease was also diagnosed in Texas. APHIS worked cooperatively with the states of California, Nevada, Arizona, and Texas to prevent the spread of the disease. The Agency sent teams of veterinarians and other personnel to the states and worked closely with the Hispanic population by providing brochures and information in Spanish, as well as broadcasting on Spanish speaking radio stations to ensure that the small backyard poultry owners were informed about APHIS' actions, which included identifying infected flocks, imposing quarantines, euthanizing and disposing of birds, when appropriate, and cleaning and disinfecting infected sites.

In FY 2003, APHIS spent \$175 million on END, of which 15 percent was directed toward small poultry farmers.

■ APHIS' Wildlife Services' (WS) Methods Development program devotes the majority of its funding efforts to small farmers and ranchers. WS's National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) is the only Federal research facility devoted exclusively to resolving conflicts between people and wildlife through the development of effective, selective, and acceptable methods, tools, and techniques.



The NWRC field station that is located in Bismarck, North Dakota, is ideally located to study methods for managing blackbird damage to sunflower farmers in the northern Great Plains. The majority of the sunflower production in North Dakota occurs on small farms. In FY 2003, 77 percent of the Wildlife Services' Methods Development budget went for supporting small farmers and ranchers, totaling \$11.5 million.

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)

■ The CSREES Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Competitive Grant Program (2501 Grant Program) Benefits Small Producers:

The 2501 Grant Program provides funds to organizations to deliver outreach and technical assistance, provide opportunities for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to successfully acquire, own, operate, and retain farms and ranches and assure their equitable participation in the full range of USDA programs. In 2003, funding for the 2501 Grant Program was \$6 million. Funding helped support a wide range of outreach and assistance activities in farm management, financial management, marketing, application and bidding procedures, and in other areas. Some examples of how diverse small farmers benefit from the 2501 Grant Program are as follows:

- A 2003 grant to the University of California will offer education on business management, farm production practices, and the full range of USDA programs to Asian, Hispanic, Native American, and African-American farmers in California to help their farms and ranches prosper. With 6,560 minority farmers and 10,340 farms operated by women, the state has the largest concentration of socially disadvantaged farm operators in the United States.
- A 2003 grant to Tuskegee University is allowing their outreach and technical assistance efforts which now serve Black farmers in their state to include other socially disadvantaged and minority farmers and family members, specifically Native American and Hispanic/Latino families. The outreach program provides information on loan application and farmers' programs to farmers so they can apply for and acquire farm ownership, farm operating, equipment, housing and youth loans, as well as enhanced business management and marketing skills to help their farm enterprises.
- In Georgia, a 2003 grant to the Federation of Southern Cooperative's Georgia State Office will assist 325 minority farmers strengthen their farm operations and retain their farmland in 18 southern Georgia counties by providing training in farm management, cooperative marketing, alternative crops and methods, and value-added enterprises. A fresh produce packing and processing facility and marketing program will be launched to support these farmers' efforts.
- A 2003 grant to the Oglala Lakota College in South Dakota will fund outreach, technical assistance, and educational programs targeted for farmers and ranchers on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, one of the most isolated and poverty-stricken areas in America, so they can successfully acquire, own, operate, and retain farms and ranches. Oglala Lakota College staff will help producers with small-scale use of their land for food and small businesses, help bison producers and horse breeders operate more successful operations, and acquaint producers with the full range of USDA programs available to help their enterprises.



Farm Service Agency (FSA)

ALABAMA

■ **Conservation Programs:** African-American producer, Billy Gibbons, of Autauga County, fully participates in FSA programs. Mr. Gibbons raises cattle on approximately 350 acres, 80 of which he owns thanks to an FSA direct operating loan. Of the 350 acres, 250 are devoted to the cattle operation (with a mixture of pasture, hay, and corn plantings) and 100 acres is a diverse vegetable farm. The land has been improved through participation in the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Indemnity Program and the installation of a well with the help of FSA's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP). He is seeking a loan to install additional fencing. On 100 acres, Mr. Gibbons plants peas, various varieties of squash, beans, okra, turnips, tomatoes, and watermelon. All of his crops are covered in the event of a disaster by FSA's Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program.

CALIFORNIA

■ **Citrus Grower:** In 1995, Rose Ann Gutierrez relocated her family to Woodlake, California, to help with her grandmother's citrus grove. Little did Rose Ann know 4 years later she would be managing and farming the grove on her own. With financial help from FSA, Rose Ann is keeping alive the memory of Chinina M. Garland, her grandmother, by reestablishing the once failing grove.

Rose Ann's search for a lender who believed in her dream led her to the FSA office in Visalia, which provided an operating loan in June 2000. "Mrs. Gutierrez is a wonderful, cooperative borrower," said Lisa M. Butler, Farm Loan Officer. "She has maintained her dream of keeping her grandmother's citrus grove alive."

Rose Ann faced many challenges with the 37-acre grove. As her grandmother became older, management and financial care were somewhat overlooked. Also, as with many other citrus growers, the 1998 freeze caused large setbacks for crop production. But, things have now been improving steadily since Rose Ann stepped in. With a little help from FSA and by making necessary cutbacks, the grove is becoming healthy and productive once more.

Since the freeze, Rose Ann has developed a little over 7 acres. She replanted varieties of oranges that are in high demand while keeping in mind the future inflows the operation may receive.

One of Rose Ann's most important decisions was to go organic; the grove will be certified this year. This process required patience, farming practice changes, and lots of cooperation from lenders, family members, and everyone who deals with the operation. Rose Ann hopes the certification will help her products reach international consumers.

Rose Ann, her husband, and three teenage sons are accountable for the grove's finances, management decisions, and daily labor. She said, "Without all my family's hard work, I don't know what I'd do." The Gutierrez family is making the grove profitable and giving their farm bright hope for the future.



CONNECTICUT

■ **Youth Loan:** There are not many 16-year old girls in Connecticut who assist in the birthing process of lambs, which makes Rachael Gately no ordinary teenager. Starting with three ewes and two ewe lambs in 1998, she has tripled her flock every year. She shows her sheep at fairs throughout New England and uses proceeds from her winnings and FSA youth loan to purchase supplies and grow her operation.

INDIANA

■ **Beginning Farmer:** A former youth loan borrower, Kurt Theurer (21 years old), paid off several youth loans and recently purchased two 80-acre tracts owned by an aunt using a loan from FSA's beginning farmer farm ownership loan program. Both tracts are being used for grain production and he's considering expanding into livestock production.

MASSACHUSETTS

■ **The Horse Next Door:** Massachusetts horse owners are teaming up with FSA, Patriot Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council, and others to bring a new effort to bear on a long standing natural resource issue affecting the environment, the management of manure.

Management of horse waste (urine, manure, and used bedding) must be considered before owning a horse. This principle is central to the new effort and the new organization, the Horse Manure Management Initiative (HMMI), which Patriot RC&D is sponsoring.

The HMMI through its efforts will demonstrate improved surface and groundwater quality in Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, and Suffolk Counties, with other locations to follow as sponsorship and participation grow.

The HMMI was created by representatives from the horse community; FSA; USDA NRCS; the Massachusetts Farm Bureau Federation; the Massachusetts Association of Stable Owners, Operators, and Instructors; and others to identify horse owners' concerns and address them through education, outreach, and public policy.

An educational brochure titled "The Horse Next Door" has been published. Publication of the Massachusetts Horse Owner's Directory, a new resource guide/directory of services for horse owners is scheduled for July 31st, and production of "The Horse Next Door," a video highlighting good horse keeping practices, is scheduled for September 2004.

MICHIGAN

■ **Farm Loan Programs:** Armando Arrellano, a Mexican immigrant, was approved for an FSA direct ownership loan to purchase a 60-acre fruit farm in Covert, Michigan. The family produces blueberries, concord grapes, apples, peaches, pears, plums, and assorted vegetables.



MINNESOTA

■ **Hmong Farmer:** On June 20, 2003, Youa Yang and brothers Vang and Ninzong finalized the purchase of a 116-acre farm in southern Dakota County. Vang and wife Va, along with Ninzong and wife, Sia Vue, purchased 58 acres of the farm and Youa purchased the remaining 58 acres. FSA Farm Loan Manager Gregg Bongard, the originator of the loan, stated that this loan is one of the few used by a Minnesota Hmong family in the purchase of a farm. Jack Gerten, Director of the St. Paul Farmers Market, estimates that there are 150 plus Hmong farmers in the State, 60 of which, including the Yangs, participate in the St. Paul Farmers' Market. Very few Hmongs own land on which they produce their crops.

Land purchase costs are major reasons why the overwhelming majority of Hmong farmers in Minnesota do not own cropland. Cropland prices within a 50-mile radius of the Metro range from \$3,000 to \$5,000 per acre. Hmong farmers traditionally operate small farms with few mechanical tools. Nigatu Tadesse, FSA outreach coordinator and former University of Minnesota Extension Service New Immigrant Farm Program Director, said "there is a growing interest among the Hmong vegetable growers to purchase farms to attain the American dream." In his current position as outreach coordinator, Tadesse states that landowners with land close to the Twin Cities need to make known any availability of land for sale.

The Yangs will use their farm to raise 35 crops ranging from oriental greens to watermelons and cut flowers. In addition, they plan to fatten steers, raise goats, Boston pigs, along with ducks and chickens. The labor source for the Yang farm, like most Hmong farms, are their children ages 7 to 14 years old. The children also help their parents in the sale of the produce at the farmers' market.

FSA is committed to assisting Hmong and new immigrant farmers in meeting their individual goals through various programs including the farm loan programs. FSA can make and guarantee loans to socially disadvantaged applicants to buy and operate family-sized farms. Funds specifically for these loans are reserved each year. The programs also provide information and assistance to applicants to help them develop sound management practices, analyze problems, and plan the best use of available resources essential for farming.

Types of available loans include both farm operating and farm ownership. Guaranteed loans may be made for farm ownership or farm operating purposes and may be made by any lending institution subject to Federal or State regulations. Farm ownership loans may be used to purchase or enlarge farms, improve buildings, promote soil and water conservation, and pay closing costs.

Farmers eligible for FSA loans include those who have a satisfactory history of meeting credit obligations, are citizens of the United States (or are a legal resident alien), and are unable to obtain credit elsewhere at reasonable rates and terms to meet actual needs and possess the legal capacity to incur loan obligations.



MONTANA

■ **Financial Assistance:** Robert Wellman is the second generation to benefit from the FSA Farm Loan Program and succeed. Robert and his wife Joan began their association with FSA more than 20 years ago when they received funding through the Emergency Loan Program.

At that time Robert and Joan were operating land owned by Robert's mother. When drought struck the northern border of Montana, the Wellmans found they were unable to receive credit from a commercial source to continue operation through the disaster. However, they did not stop there. Robert and Joan proceeded to obtain a direct operating loan from FSA to buy 200 head of cattle. Within 10 years, the Wellmans were able to pay back the loan and graduate from the FSA loan program.

According to Robert, "FSA did us a favor, we didn't want to graduate, but I paid the 30 year loan off in 10 years, they wouldn't let us stay...I was able to graduate to a commercial source that I have been with ever since."

Today, the Wellmans run approximately 1,500 head of cattle and farm 20,000 acres near the Canadian border in Montana.

NEW JERSEY

■ **Flower Business:** Young Lee and Dae Hyun Lee have been in the flower business for 20 years. Twelve years ago they decided to grow their own flowers to market in their shop. They moved to New Jersey and purchased land to grow sunflowers, cockscomb, asters, and dahlias for marketing in New York City. In 2001, they expanded their operation with help from FSA. The couple needed FSA's help to purchase the neighboring blueberry farm. In 2002, they expanded again adding 270 more acres of blueberries and 50 acres of cranberries, using the combination of an FSA direct ownership loan, guaranteed operating loan, and commercial financing.

NEW YORK

■ **FSA State Committee Member:** Oscar Vizcarra, FSA State committee member and a native Peruvian, is co-owner and operator of Becker Farms in Gasport, New York. He and his wife direct-market their apples, berries, and assorted vegetables at a road-side stand. Vizcarra traveled to New York City, along with a group of local farmers, to discuss production agriculture with immigrants participating in the city's New Farmer Development Program.

Most participants are Hispanic/Latin American immigrants who had fairly large farming and ranching operations in their native countries and now find themselves starting over with limited English skills and capital.

NORTH DAKOTA

■ **Farm Loan Programs:** Born and raised near the agricultural community of Colima, Mexico, Joaquin came to the United States as an assistant to a beekeeper in Louisiana. He



worked there for a number of years before deciding to try his own hand at beekeeping in North Dakota.

Joaquin received an FSA operating loan to establish his beekeeping venture. But setbacks and complications plagued his business for the first few years. During that time, Joaquin rented vacant farmsteads to store and process his honey, but this forced him to move his operation from time to time. However, he never gave up on or lost sight of his goal. After receiving an FSA farm ownership loan, Joaquin built a new 60' x 150' facility.

“With the help of direct loan assistance from FSA,” said Joaquin, “I have been able to establish a permanent honey processing facility that is allowing me to increase my production, expand my operation, and hire additional employees.”

Joaquin is proud of becoming an American citizen and appreciative of the chance to prosper by developing and operating an apiary. He is also thankful for the opportunity to provide a rural lifestyle for his family on the North Dakota prairie.

PENNSYLVANIA

■ **Milk Income Loss Contract Program (MILC):** FSA personnel in Lancaster County, a county known for its Amish and Mennonite communities, are seeking to increase FSA’s program participation by members of this underserved population. Historically, the Amish and Mennonites in the area did not participate in FSA commodity, production adjustment, or price support programs (although some Amish did avail themselves of the various farm loan and conservation cost-share programs). However, through extensive outreach efforts, program participation in the Amish and Mennonite communities rose from zero to 513 participants in MILC. These 513 participants represent 58 percent of the dairy farmers in the county who signed MILC program contracts for payment (879 total participants).

PUERTO RICO

■ **FSA Programs:** Mr. Glidden Martinez, 64 years old, of Utuado, Puerto Rico, has been farming 140 acres of plantains for 35 years. He operates a family farm with his two sons and mother-in-law. The Martinez family also operates a 24,000 capacity broiler house that is in production all year. “If it wasn’t for FSA, I would have gone out of business a long time ago,” he said. Mr. Martinez participated in both the FSA Emergency Loan and Crop Disaster Assistance Programs in 2000 after Hurricane George devastated the island.

SOUTH DAKOTA

■ **Financial Assistance Needed:** Sonny, a Native American rancher in South Dakota, came to FSA in need of financing. At the time, a bank was about to foreclose on his operation. Times were tough and the previous spring weather got the best of him with late blizzards which caused a high livestock death loss. When Sonny contacted FSA, he had 25 cows, 14 replacement heifers, and 12 calves. He was trying to make ends meet by taking in some pasture cattle.



Working with an FSA farm loan manager, Sonny learned how his business could operate more efficiently. Goals were set and a road map was devised. Sonny applied for and received a direct operating loan from FSA.

Five years later, Sonny's operation had grown to 116 cows, 5 bulls, and 17 yearlings. Sonny calves his cows late March to early April, and markets calves in late October weaning off 525 - 600-pound calves.

Sonny is thankful for FSA's helping hand. "Honesty, pride, hard work, and working with FSA's loan officer contributed to my success," he said. FSA has given this determined producer the opportunity and tools he needs to build a profitable, growing, and successful ranch.

TEXAS

■ **FSA Casts Financial "Safety Net" under Texas Shrimpers:** When Texas shrimpers were declared eligible for the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program, FSA suddenly gained a new clientele...a closely-knit community who knew little about FSA and who had only 90 days to learn how to apply for assistance from the Federal government.

Thanks to the help of dedicated members of Texas' coastal Vietnamese communities, FSA has made great strides in spreading the word about the potential benefits offered through TAA to shrimpers whose fishing income has declined in recent years to foreign competition.

USDA, through TAA, provides technical assistance and financial benefits to producers if an increase in imports of a commodity has contributed significantly to a decline in market price resulting in a decline in incomes. Such is the case with the Texas shrimp industry.

Through her office window in Palacios, Thuy Vu, owner of a wholesale/retail seafood market and several shrimping vessels, and Matagorda FSA County Executive Director Tom Brown, can see signs of an industry enduring difficult times. "There are shrimp boats that have been docked for months because of high fuel costs and low market prices," Brown says. Brown estimates each boat requires some 2,500 gallons of fuel for a 10-15 day trip with no guarantee of a profitable haul. It is a dilemma that has plagued not only the boat owners, but the crew members relying on shrimping for their livelihood.

Vu is one of the rare individuals in the community who actually knows about FSA. In addition to their shrimping interests, she and her husband have a redfish operation funded with an FSA guaranteed loan. Her knowledge of FSA, coupled with her high standing in the Vietnamese community, along with a willingness to serve as an interpreter, have proven invaluable in reaching out to potential recipients of TAA benefits.

At a meeting hosted by FSA specifically for the Vietnamese fishing community, Vu collaborated with Brown to provide a thorough overview of FSA, the TAA program, and the TAA application process. Many of the 200-plus participants did not speak English. Vu, along with Charles Chan, served as interpreters throughout the meeting and assisted individuals with their questions and concerns.



“It was a productive, working meeting,” says Brown. “We worked well into the evening hours to ensure that each applicant’s information was complete and that we had all of the documentation we needed before we concluded the meeting.”

Brown added, “Thuy did her homework before the meeting, making sure that her fellow shrimp producers arrived prepared. She had encouraged them to gather their tax, production, and sales records prior to attending this meeting. Her efforts allowed FSA to efficiently complete the application process for many of the shrimpers who attended the meeting.”

Earlier in the day, Brown hosted a general meeting attended by another 124 shrimpers and interested individuals to discuss the TAA program. In total, Brown met with more than 300 producers. Texas’ Agricultural Extension Service estimates that, in Texas alone, as many as 2,500 TAA shrimp applications were submitted by the February 9, 2004, filing deadline.

FSA has scheduled numerous formal public meetings along the Texas Gulf Coast, and has made significant efforts to overcome language and cultural barriers with both the Vietnamese and Spanish-speaking shrimping communities, providing voice interpreters at meetings and non-legal written information translated, as needed, into these languages.

In terms of dollars allocated, TAA is by no means the largest Federal farm program administered by FSA, but according to Brown, “TAA has created a presence for FSA in communities that do not typically participate in Federal farm programs. We’ve opened the door to future opportunities to provide our services to individuals in the aquaculture industry.”

UTAH

■ **Small Farmers:** Two years ago Jeremy Johnson and his sister Kira Ann Johnson, from San Juan County, Utah, came to FSA seeking loans. Jeremy wanted to purchase crop land and Kira was interested in buying pasture land and cattle. They have both farmed and ranched with their father, Johnny Johnson, since they were old enough to sit in the tractor and see out the window.

Now in their twenties, they have decided to follow in their father’s footsteps. Jeremy and Kira received the loans and have been successful in their farming operations. They came back to FSA this year looking to purchase additional real estate.

Kira has 50 cows and 3 bulls. She reports that they are doing very well and most of them are young enough to be able to stay in the herd for some time before being replaced. She hopes to build her herd from her own replacements (or purchase them from her father).

Jeremy is raising wheat and safflower on his land, and he leases additional land from a neighbor.

Both Kira and Jeremy have lived in Monticello, Utah, all of their lives. Their older sister Seresa is also a farmer, and she, too, has a loan with FSA. Farming is truly a family business for the Johnsons who credit FSA for helping them succeed.



WASHINGTON

■ **Farm Loan Programs:** Luanne and her husband Chuck, members of the Confederate Tribe of the Colvilles in Washington, dreamed of owning a cow/calf operation. “A bank was not an option because we would not be able to cash-flow on the property for four or five years,” Luanne said. After obtaining FSA farm operating and ownership loans, the couple built a uniform herd, focusing on Angus bulls. FSA was willing to lend the couple money at a time when other lending institutions looked the other way. The couple now manages a thriving 135-head cow/calf operation.

WEST VIRGINIA

■ **Mountain RC&D Council:** Fred Williams, FSA County Executive Director (CED) for Nicholas and Webster Counties in West Virginia, has been a CED for over 30 years. For over half of this gentlemen’s career, Williams has taken an active role with the Mountain RC&D Council.

Mr. Williams has served the Mountain RC&D Council as Chair to the Executive Committee and Forestry Committee, and currently serves as Chair of the Forestry Committee. His activities and interests with RC&D have been continuous and his relationship with the RC&D Council members, NRCS, and Conservation District has been outstanding.

In 1991, Mr. Williams was awarded a plaque in recognition of the Council’s appreciation. Mr. Williams was also recognized with another plaque in 2002 by the Council for his hard work and dedication relating to his outstanding work benefiting forestry.

One aspect of the outstanding and diligent work that this CED has completed, within the realm of RC&D, includes the attainment, approval, and training of special work crews to assist with various types of forestry activities. These special work crews are organized through the Civilian Conservation Corporation. Thanks to Mr. Williams, these crews are being organized and receiving special training to be available to assist producers and landowners in their various forestry needs.

An additional achievement of Mr. Williams’ RC&D work with these crews includes the coordination and attachment of a lower cost for worker’s compensation charges through the government of West Virginia. This extra benefit attained by Mr. Williams’ dedication and abilities not only benefit average landowners, but especially assists limited resource producers and individuals. His efforts created a worker’s compensation classification for forest crew workers at a rate consistent with similar class workers which was prohibited in the past.

WISCONSIN

■ **Youth Loan:** Jeff Pesz, a 17-year-old from Wonewoc, Wisconsin, has always been known as a hard worker, but admits he didn’t really know what hard work was until he started his own calf-raising business in August 2002, with the help of an FSA youth loan.



Jeff started his own calf-raising business in the late summer of 2002. To cut back on cost, Jeff merged his calves into his sister, Kim's, calf raising business. At the time, Jeff was starting his first semester in college and was busy with school work and trying to get his business off the ground. His sister took care of the calves on Mondays and Wednesdays, when he was in class, and he took care of them the remainder of the week. Jeff was responsible for paying Kim a rental fee, just as he would have to anyone else. He also paid for all feed, hay, medicines, and vaccines required for his herd.

"I purchased all of my steers when they were just a few days to one week old," said Jeff. "I paid between \$80 to \$120 for each calf, depending on the weight and the market price. When I sold them as steers they weighed between 280 and 300 pounds. Market prices range from \$.70 to \$.80 cents a pound." Jeff admits that raising steers was a hard business to be in, but he would gladly do it all over again. Owning his own business helped him finance his education and realize the importance of managing his money wisely and establishing good credit.

According to Jeff's FSA farm loan officer, Gerald McCauley, Jeff's loan was closed August 27, 2002, and it was paid in full July 7, 2003, over 45 days in advance. "Now that's unusual" said McCauley, especially from someone so young. I was impressed with his drive and determination throughout the whole process."

"I could not have obtained a loan anywhere else on my own without a co-signer and this is something that I wanted to do on my own," said Jeff. He is very thankful for the opportunity afforded to him by FSA.

The FSA Youth Loan Program is available to youths, ages 10 to 20, who live in rural areas where the population is less than 10,000. The maximum loan amount is \$5,000 and the terms of the loan vary depending upon the project, which has to be income producing.

FSA National Outreach Projects and Initiatives

■ **Outreach Training and Technical Assistance to Small and Limited-Resource Farmers:** FSA signed a cooperative agreement in FY 2003 with the University of Puerto Rico (UPR). FSA continues to work with the UPR at Mayaguez and the Puerto Rico Agricultural Extension Service to provide outreach, training, and technical assistance to small and limited-resource farmers to ensure that all farmers in Puerto Rico are aware of FSA's programs and services. The goal of the program is to improve farm income through better management and financial analysis, and to provide assistance for small farmers to ensure they have access to all services available through various FSA programs. FSA funding of \$199,721 was provided.

Hispanic Farm and Ranch Management Project: FSA entered into a cooperative agreement in FY 2003 with the University of Texas Pan-American.

The agreement, in support of the South Border Region initiative, provides outreach, training, technical assistance, and other support for loan, disaster assistance, and conservation programs to Hispanic American farmers and ranchers in Texas and New Mexico. The program will also



afford real opportunities for participation in FSA programs, growth, and revitalization of their agribusiness, and will assist FSA in accomplishing its mission and objectives in the region. Funding in the amount of \$299,800 was provided.

■ **First Annual National Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers Conference:**

FSA co-sponsored the 1st Annual National Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers Conference was held on February 22-25, 2004, in San Antonio, Texas. The conference, hosted by the Texas/Mexico Border Coalition provided a forum for networking and forming new partnerships between public and private stakeholders to maximize their effectiveness in assisting small and limited resource farmers and ranchers to survive and thrive in the 21st Century. Conference attendance was estimated at 200 participants.

National Tribal Development Association (NTDA) Project:

■ **USDA Agricultural Mediation Program FY 2003:** The FSA certified State agricultural mediation program helps small farm operators and their creditors resolve disputes in a non-adversarial setting, thus avoiding the traditional process of litigation, appeals, bankruptcy, and foreclosure. In FY 2003, FSA obligated over \$3.9 million in matching mediation grants to 30 State agricultural mediation programs. The number of mediation clients increased from 3,804 in FY 2002 to over 4,991 clients in FY 2003. The number of resolutions increased from 73 percent to over 74 percent in FY 2003. The average cost per mediation case in FY 2003 was between \$687 and \$700.

■ **Conference Support to assist Small and Limited Resource Farmers:** FSA continues to work with Black Institutions of higher education to assist in their efforts to provide assistance to minority limited resource farmers. During FY 2003, \$5,000 was provided to the Small Limited Resource Minority Farm Conference hosted by Kentucky State University (KSU). This joint effort between USDA and KSU represents an ongoing effort by FSA to increase outreach to small limited resource farmers. Also, \$5,000 was provided to Prairie View A&M University and \$15,000 to Southern University and A&M College to support rural youth agricultural and science projects.

■ **Multi-Agency American Indian Initiative:** In FY 2003, FSA provided \$100,000 for its share of a multi-USDA agency American Indian “Farm Bill” Outreach Initiative to American Indians throughout Indian Country. This effort was conducted through a grant by the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Economic Service.

■ **Needs Assessment of Women Farmers and Ranchers:** In FY 2003, FSA signed a 1-year cooperative agreement with the Rural Coalition to conduct a participatory social survey to identify and define the roles of women in agriculture. The survey will also help the USDA implement policies that will better serve the needs of female producers. The results of this survey will provide FSA with a baseline from which to build a strong program aimed at increasing women’s awareness, access to, and participation in USDA programs.



■ **Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries:** FSA provided \$121,464 in FY 2003 to continue its statewide program of plasticulture. Farmers throughout Alabama, using plasticulture, can overcome drought conditions, thus maximizing their chances of economical viability.

■ **Mississippi Delta Plasticulture Project:** FSA entered into a cooperative agreement in FY 2003 with Mississippi Action for Community Education, Incorporated, to conduct a plasticulture project in Mississippi. The project will promote opportunities in agriculture for at risk minority Delta youths. FSA provided \$128,410 in funding.

■ **National Association of Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Conference:** FSA co-sponsored the 2003 Annual Conference of the National Association of RC&D Councils held in San Antonio, Texas, the week of July 20-23, 2003. More than 1,500 community volunteers, conservation partners, government representatives, and guests from across the country attended the conference.

■ **National Outreach Media Blitz:** FSA provided \$60,000 in FY 2002 through a cooperative agreement with the NTDA to conduct a National Outreach Media Blitz. This initiative was utilized to encourage, inform, and assist American Indians across the Nation to participate in and be elected to the FSA county office committees (COC). In FY 2003 the project was modified to target specific areas of Indian Country to increase the opportunity for successful participation in this election.

This project was highly successful in increasing the number of American Indians participating in the COC election. Over 42 percent of all minorities on the FSA COC are now Native Americans. In FY 2003, FSA again provided \$65,900 to the NTDA to continue this nationwide outreach initiative to increase the participation of American Indians in the FSA COC nomination and election process.

■ **National FSA American Indian Credit Outreach Initiative:** Based on the outstanding success of the NTDA's previous 4-year outreach project on agriculture credit in the State of Montana, in FY 2002 FSA expanded the National FSA American Indian Credit Outreach Initiative nationwide on a 3-year phased approach. The project increased the loan levels to Native Americans in Montana 100 percent to about \$10 million while the delinquency rate for Native Americans was reduced by 50 percent based on the pre-education and loan counseling.

In FY 2002, Phase I of the project was expanded to 10 northern States and FSA provided \$866,022. In FY 2003, because of the project's positive results, FSA provided an additional \$1,599,954 for the implementation of Phase II of the project expanding the outreach effort to 35 Northern and Eastern States.

■ **USDA Tribal Consultation Meeting:** In FY 2002, FSA participated in the site visit and job fair for the first ever USDA Tribal Consultation Meeting held with the Navajo Nation. The site visit and job fair was held in Window Rock, Arizona.



■ **Intertribal Agricultural Council (IAC):** In FY 2002, as a continuing effort, FSA participated in a multi-agency contract with IAC. The contract was on its fifth year of a 5-year agreement with participating USDA agencies on an outreach effort to notify American Indians and Tribal Governments of available USDA programs. FSA's portion of funding for FY 2002 was \$100,000.

■ **USDA's Native American Indian Program Group:** In FYs 2002 and 2003, the FSA Native American Liaison chaired the USDA's American Indian Program Group. The group meets monthly to discuss and coordinate multi-USDA agency program issues, outreach needs, and efforts to ensure agencies were effectively and efficiently conducting their outreach efforts to Native Americans. The FSA Liaison also served as the FSA's representative to the USDA Native American Working Group, which meets monthly to coordinate all American Indian issues throughout USDA, including Civil Rights issues.

■ **Oklahoma Plasticulture Project:** FSA entered into a cooperative agreement in FYs 2003 and 2004 with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry. The Plasticulture/Marketing "Sustainable Agriculture Program" provided direct marketing options for small farmers. The 30 newly created farmer markets and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides \$1,000,000 in coupons directly to Oklahoma certified producers. All of these activities will create a favorable climate for small and limited resource farmers. FSA funded the project with \$154,899.

■ **Professional Agriculture Workers Conference (PAWC):** FSA continues to provide financial support to the PAWC held annually at Tuskegee University. The conference is hosted by Tuskegee University and provides a forum for agricultural practitioners including academia, private industry, farmers, and ranchers for networking and exchanging ideas on how to provide better services and aide small and limited resource farmers and ranchers. Funding in the amount of \$5,000 was provided.

■ **Tuskegee University Annual Farmers Conference:** FSA provided \$5,000 in financial support to Tuskegee University to co-sponsor the 112th Annual Farmers Conference. The conference is a 2-day educational forum held annually at Tuskegee University that features panel discussions and concurrent workshops. The sessions address emerging issues surrounding small farm families and rural communities.

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

■ **Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP):** FNS continues to be an active participant in the annual national conference of the National Association of Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP). This Association includes members that operate the FMNP and/or the SFMNP.

FNS conducted a site visit of one of the new SFMNP grantees in FY 2003. Site visits provide an excellent opportunity for FNS to offer technical assistance to new grantees.



With FNS assistance, NAFMNP produces an annual Program Impact Report that highlights the accomplishments of FMNP. This report is the primary document used by FNS and NAFMNP to describe the administration and outcome of FMNP and continues to be a valuable outreach, training, and marketing tool. In an effort to promote the benefits of FMNP and SFMNP, FNS developed two banners to exhibit at conferences, meetings, and other events.

For further information, please visit our Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/wic.

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)

In FYs 2002 and 2003, the Animal and Egg Production Food Safety Branch (AEPFSB) within the Office of Public Health Science (OPHS) assisted small farmers and ranchers by providing non assistance cooperative agreements to minority colleges and universities; by developing a Production Level Brochure, “Residue Avoidance for Cattle Farmers and Ranchers”; by offering an Animal and Egg Production Food Safety Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico; and by giving Production Level Food Safety presentations and staffing FSIS exhibits at national conferences.

■ Cooperative Agreements – Minority Universities

- FY 2003 – \$169,000.00. University of Puerto Rico, 20K; North Carolina A&T, 24K; Si Tanka University, 25K; Fort Peck College, 20K; University of Texas-Pan American, 30K; Prairie View A&M University, 30K; New Mexico State University, 20K.
- FY 2002 - \$60,000.00 (20K each). Florida A&M, Alabama A&M, Langston University.

■ The Production Level Brochure, “Residue Avoidance for Cattle Farmers and Ranchers” is currently in Agency Review. It identifies current Agency Residue procedures, discusses the Public Health implications of residues, and provides methods and resources on how to prevent residues in cattle presented for slaughter.

■ FSIS, in conjunction with the Food and Drug Administration and the University of Puerto Rico, sponsored an Animal and Egg Production Food Safety Conference held in July 2002 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The intent was to provide liaison from the U.S. mainland and education on HACCP-compatible food safety production level programs for farmers, ranchers, agricultural educators, researchers, and industrial organizations in Puerto Rico, Spanish speaking Caribbean, and Spanish speaking Latin America.

■ AEPFSB provided Production Level Food Safety presentations and staffed FSIS exhibits at seven national conferences for small farmers and ranchers in FYs 2002 and 2003. Three of these were outreach conferences in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Shiprock, New Mexico, and Chinle, Arizona. Other support was given at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/LAF 30th Annual Small Farmers Marketing & Trade Conference, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, the Landowners Association of Texas 18th Annual Farmers & Ranchers Conference, and the Alabama A&M University annual Goat Day.



Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)

FAS bears the primary responsibility for USDA's overseas agricultural activities, which include market development, international trade agreements and negotiations, the collection and analysis of statistics, and market information. FAS also do the following:

- (1) Administers USDA's export credit guarantee and food aid programs.
- (2) Helps increase income and food availability in developing nations by mobilizing expertise for agriculturally led economic growth.
- (3) Operates programs designed to build new markets and improve the competitive position of U.S. agriculture in the global marketplace.

Additionally,

■ FAS programs help U.S. agricultural exporters develop and maintain markets overseas for hundreds of food and agricultural products, from bulk commodities to brand name food items. Promotional activities are carried out chiefly in cooperation with agricultural trade associations, state-regional trade groups, small businesses, and cooperatives that plan, manage, and contribute staff resources and funds to support these efforts.

■ FAS coordinates and directs USDA's responsibilities in international trade negotiations, working closely with the U.S. Trade Representative's office, other USDA agencies, and the U.S. agricultural industry to help identify and to reduce foreign trade barriers and other practices and policies that hinder U.S. agricultural exports. FAS's trade information is used to develop and hone strategies to increase market access, pursue U.S. rights under trade agreements, and improve programs and policies to make U.S. farm products more competitive.

■ FAS enhances U.S. agriculture's competitiveness by providing linkages to world resources and international organizations. These linkages produce new technologies that improve the agricultural base and produce new and alternative products, promote mutually beneficial relationships between scientists and leaders domestically and worldwide, and connect the technical expertise of the U.S. agricultural community with counterparts in other countries. Through collaborative research, the U.S. agricultural sector gains access to emerging technologies and a wider array of genetic material, and developing nations have access to the technical expertise that can help them surmount the barriers of hunger and poverty and build more stable economies.

■ The Cochran Fellowship Program provides training to agriculturalists from middle-income countries, emerging markets, and emerging democracies. They gain exposure to U.S. economic policies, agricultural business practices, and products, and they are introduced to U.S. agribusinesses, agencies, and other organizations.



FAS Outreach Programs and Activities

■ The objective of the FAS Office of Outreach and Exporter Assistance (OOEA) outreach activities is to identify and to expand FAS customer base and their knowledge, access to and participation in export programs, services and market opportunities abroad, as well as improving services to the traditionally underserved and limited-resource customers.

The FAS goal is to increase exports of U.S. agricultural products through active participation/utilization and understanding of the export programs and resources available. Activities are undertaken which create partnership, facilitate communication and education, and enhance outreach coordination among constituents and potential customers.

■ The FAS Small Farms Coordinator (SFC) also continues to be a strong advocate for small and disadvantaged farmers and agricultural businesses and their participation in market development programs for exporting. The SFC collaborates with the FAS Civil Rights Staff to ensure equal access to FAS programs and activities and participation in the trade and exporting to facilitate the Agency's commitment to ensuring that equal opportunity and civil rights principles are demonstrated in the Agency's program delivery practices and activities.

Other FAS Outreach Initiatives

■ **Expanding Partnerships with Nonprofit Organizations:** OOEA established partnerships with many of the service providers to farmers and agricultural businesses. This office also expanded its partnership with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Rural Coalition, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Historical Black Colleges and Universities, the National Minority Supplier Diversity Council, and the Department of Commerce, among others.

NASDA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan association of public officials comprised of the Commissioners, Secretaries, and Directors of the fifty state departments of agriculture and those from the territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands.

The OOEA participates yearly in NASDA national and regional events, as well as in the state departments of agriculture activities. FAS also partners with NASDA to promote the U.S. Food and Market Institute food show every year by bringing foreign trade missions and FAS overseas specialists to the show to promote and discuss the opportunities for U.S. food sales abroad.

FAS also partnered with the Idaho Department of Agriculture to set up an export seminar for Idaho companies to learn one on one details for the FAS Export Credit programs.

Approximately 30 Idaho companies participated in the seminar. The seminar was an outgrowth of FAS long-term partnership with the state departments of agriculture and our new partnership with the Department of Commerce.

■ **Export Education Seminars in Philadelphia and Newark:** In 2002, FAS agricultural staff gave presentations in export education seminars focusing on Mexico, Canada, the Dominican Republic, and other Caribbean markets. The seminars were sponsored by the state departments of agriculture in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, St. Joseph's University, and Food Export USA-



Northeast. The three markets highlighted are currently among the largest customers for U.S. food and agricultural products. In 2001, the United States' two North American Free Trade Agreement partners, Canada and Mexico, together took an unprecedented \$15.3 billion in U.S. agricultural products. .

■ **FAS Participates in USDA Farm Bill Briefing:** In 2002, the OOEa participated in the first USDA 2002 Farm Bill briefing for small farmers and traditionally underserved customers orchestrated by the USDA Office of Outreach. The event was designed to connect USDA customers to agency programs and services and new provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill.

Over 320 people attended the briefing on the campus of Virginia State University in Petersburg, Virginia. Emphasis was placed on how USDA can better serve traditionally underserved customers. FAS stressed the importance of trade, the myriad of export programs and services, and ongoing efforts with industry and through trade negotiations to open more markets overseas for agricultural products.

■ **FAS Launches Its Export Readiness Training (ERT) Program:** In FY 2003, FAS approved and began its ERT program in South Carolina. Ten companies were chosen and a 7-month training program began in January. Despite the fact that the training will not be entirely completed until August, export discussions have already begun between Sylvia's Food and Wal-Mart Canada, and TJ Woods and P&G China. Both are small minority owned and operated companies.

A final report has been received for the first three ERT programs that begin in 1999 (Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia). The report sights approximately \$2 million in sales as a result of this program. A subsequent program for Texas has been completed, but a final report has not been delivered.

■ **FAS Advocates Agricultural Exports To USDA 2501 Recipients:** In 2003, the OOEa presented information on the importance of U.S. agricultural trade to (60) 2501 Program participants and supporters of underserved and disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Of interest was information on how to get started in exporting and the role of the State departments of agriculture in providing export assistance.

The 2501 Program provides outreach and technical assistance to encourage and assist socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to participate in agricultural programs. In 2003, USDA awarded 34 competitive grants to colleges and community-based organizations totaling \$6.4 million for the program.

FAS also briefed USDA 2501 Program Directors about FAS and export programs and services. The objective was to use the train-the-trainer model to have the 2501 Directors provide export information to producers who could participate in the export of food products.

■ **FAS Participates in the Council of 1890 Land and Land Grant Meetings:** In 2003, the OOEa provided export information to the Council of 1890 Presidents/Chancellors during their summer annual meeting in Memphis. FAS shared with the Council information on opportunities



for partnership on technical assistance in international projects. FAS also provided information on other USDA programs and services for small farms. In 2002, the Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with minority farmers and their associations.

The purpose of the MOU is to reaffirm the 1890s' long standing commitment to improving the productivity and performance of minority farmers and strengthening existing relationships between the 1890 universities and minority farmers. The Council visited with small farmers at the Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation in Brinkley, Arkansas.

■ **Developing Further FAS Partnerships:** In 2002, the OOEa participated in the USDA Outreach sponsored workshop in Perry, Georgia. The targeted audience for the event was small and limited to resource farmers, ranchers, producers, growers, and landowners. Alcorn State, Fort Valley State, Southern University College, and Tuskegee sponsored the workshop. Nearly 500 participants attended the session.

■ OOEa staff met with the Southwest Louisiana Economic Development, Inc., and the Greater New Orleans Agricultural Coalition and Enterprise Communities, 2002. The purpose of the meeting was to develop further FAS partnership with these organizations. Both organizations represent a diverse constituent base and seek opportunities to improve the depressed rural Louisiana communities and low economic conditions of minority producers. The OOEa toured rural Louisiana and met with producers, small town mayors, and other non-profits. Through FAS assistance, these organizations are working with land-grant universities to access USDA programs in order to provide benefit to rural Louisiana and Mississippi communities and small producers.

■ **FAS Participates in Small Farm Events Sponsored by Alcorn State University's (ASU) Extension Service:** ASU is the oldest 1890 land-grant college and partners with USDA on many agricultural related programs and projects.

In 2003, OOEa participated in the "Small Farm Field Day" in Preston, Mississippi, sponsored by ASU Extension Service. The research facility in Preston is used to develop small specialty and medicinal crops. Local producers participate in an onsite 3-year production research, education, and extension program. The facility is funded directly through state appropriations and land is leased from local landowners. Topics discussed included cooperative development, farmers market, risk management, HACCP, marketing and exporting. Attendees included students, producers, extension agents, state legislators, and USDA AMS, RBS staff.

In 2003, the OOEa also promoted agricultural entrepreneurship in the global economy to minority junior and senior high school students brought together in Mississippi by Alcorn State University's School of Agriculture in the form of a week long Agricultural Entrepreneurship Camp.

OOEA provided information on the U.S. and world market for food and agricultural products, trade agreements, export programs and careers in agriculture. The camp sought to stimulate high school students' interest in the field of agriculture and agribusinesses and expose students to new



and innovative agricultural concepts like genetically modified organisms, Federal and state agricultural agencies, businesses, and career opportunities in the world of food and fiber industries.

In 2002, OOEa met with minority producers, small farm and extension specialists, and other service providers attending Alcorn State University's 13th Annual Field Day. The theme was "Moving Mississippi's Families and Farms into the 21st Century." An estimated 1,200 farmers and families participated. Participants learned of export opportunities and programs available from USDA. Seminars conducted included food safety, mushroom production on sawdust blocks, health and nutrition, and a briefing on the class action settlement. Demonstration tours included visits to a muscadine field, a tree planting site, and an animal husbandry facility.

■ **FAS Participates in a Meeting at Southern University to Increase Awareness of USDA's Programs:** In 2003, the OOEa presented information on foreign markets, FAS, export and USDA programs to university agricultural leaders at Southern University, Louisiana State, and Alcorn State. The objective of the meeting was to create an increased awareness of USDA's programs and the opportunities for the sustainability of small producers and rural communities through the integration of policies adopted by rural business leaders.

The meeting resulted in Southern University taking the lead with Alcorn State and Louisiana State as collaborators to develop a proposal for submission through the Fund for Rural America. The proposal targets rural agricultural communities in Louisiana and Mississippi. The goal is to develop a model that would help diversify rural economies, develop and maintain profitable farms, and businesses, and build partnership for viable communities.

■ **FAS Reaches Out to Rice Producers in Arkansas:** Also in 2003, the OOEa visited Arkansas rice producers in the Arkansas Delta. OOEa visited the farm operations of an African American rice producer and processor working 3,000 acres, which mills long grain rice for Gulf Rice and processes private label rice for pet food. OOEa continues to assist the producer to understand the export market. OOEa visited another rice producer in the Delta with 1,000 acres in medium grain production interested in exporting rice (rough and processed) and other agricultural products. The producer also grows edible soybeans for a broker of buyers in Japan.

■ **FAS Outreach with Oklahoma Small Farmers:** In 2002, OOEa presented information on FAS and exporting to an estimated 250 minority producers in Oklahoma. Most of the participants were unfamiliar with either. Producers' concerns raised included the need for USDA to improve customer service and program processes, to identify program procedural timelines, and to provide in-depth information about all USDA programs and the effects outsourcing would have on USDA programs and services to producers. The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture and Langston University sponsored the event with support from the USDA.

■ **FAS Participates in the "Hawaii To Go Conference:"** In 2001, OOEa participated in this conference that was held in Maui, Hawaii. More than 80 Hawaiian producers and processors took part in the first successful rural and export market development resource conference



sponsored in Hawaii. The conference outlined the export programs and services available to Hawaiian exporters from the USDA and the Oregon State Food Innovation Center. USDA speakers from Rural Development and FAS addressed issues and questions from Hawaiian producers. FAS speakers discussed the FAS Emerging Markets Program, the Market Access Program, and Export Credit Programs. OOEa representatives to the conference spoke about Hawaii's agricultural exports.

■ **Outreach to Service Providers for Farmers:** In 2001, OOEa participated in the USDA Risk Management National Outreach Conference in Memphis. The conference targeted universities, State and Federal employees, and non-profit organizations that provide services to farmers. An estimated 130 individuals attended the conference. OOEa presented a session on exporting. Twenty service providers and ten producers attended the session. Participants expressed an interest to continue learning more about the opportunities in exporting and participating in USDA programs. OOEa also presented information to a delegation from Senegal on U.S. agriculture and the USDA overseas program. The delegation was visiting on a city-to-city partnership program with the Department of Commerce and Economic Development.

■ **FAS International Research and Exchange Programs:** FAS's Scientific Cooperation and Research Programs have enhanced linkages for collaborative research between Historically Black Colleges and Universities and African countries since the early 1980's. These programs support international cooperative research efforts focused on practical uses of science to help solve critical problems affecting U.S. agriculture and forestry, such as trade barriers and phytosanitary issues, food safety, and exotic diseases and pests. Florida A&M, Fort Valley State, Langston, Prairie View, and Tuskegee Universities are conducting joint research with scientists in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

Scientific cooperative research activities promote the safe and appropriate development and application of biotechnology and other tools for food safety, improving the nutritive value and resistance of crops and livestock, environmental sustainability, and other priority food and agriculture issues affecting needs of limited resource and small farmers.

This scientific cooperation, a vital component of the sustainable agricultural development necessary for both domestic and global food security, also helps increase the technical and scientific capabilities of both U.S. and foreign scientists, including the increasing participation of women.

■ **FAS Participates in the Risk Management Agency Conference:** In 2003, OOEa and other USDA agencies sponsored and disseminated information to approximately 600 attendees at the Risk Management Agency Conference in San Diego, California. The Conference gave small and limited-resource agricultural producers the tools necessary to obtain information and effectively understand and evaluate options available to them.

■ **FAS Partners with the Business Women Network (BWN) to Expand Outreach Efforts:** FAS developed an MOU in 1999 with the Business Women Network to develop, enhance and expand outreach efforts to women in agriculture, involved in both on-farm and off-farm



activities, by disseminating information about FAS programs and services throughout BWN affiliates and members, and other activities specified in this agreement. Women own 40 percent of all private agriculture land in the United States.

■ **FAS Participates in a Conference for Native American Women:** The Fort Mojave Tribe in Nevada hosted a conference for Native American Women with Disabilities in 2002, with over 200 participants from across the country sharing experiences and exploring increased access to funding, technical assistance, training, internship and employment opportunities. FAS coordinated a session covering successful examples of Native American participation in domestic and international USDA food and agriculture programs ranging from resources for people with disabilities, to projects helping cooperatives and individuals produce and market value-added products locally and overseas, to environmental concerns and rural development.

■ **FAS Reaches Out To Minority Farmers & Women Businesses.** In 2003, OOEA presented information on FAS, global markets, and export programs to 34 small minority farmers and women in business who expressed interest in utilizing FAS's programs and services. Highlighted by FAS was the importance of having quality products, sufficient volume and an international marketing plan. The 2-day conference brought together 200 minority businesses from Mississippi and Arkansas, and was organized by the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, and co-sponsored with Alcorn State University, Mississippi Forestry Commission, and USDA's Risk Management Agency.

■ **FAS Reaches Out to Minority Suppliers:** In 2003, OOEA attended the National Minority Supply Development Council (NMSDC) Conference to search for potential minority food exporters. OOEA was successful in finding seven potential export-ready companies seeking export assistance for potential foreign buyers. The NMSDC has a food and beverage industry group committee. OOEA began working with the group to provide export information to them and to develop a partnership with minority companies through the NMSDC.

■ **FAS Provided Export Assistance To An African-American Food Company:** In 2003, OOEA provided hands-on export assistance to an export-ready African American manufacturer of beef and pork. Based in Illinois, Duerson Foods is a supplier of pork, turkey, and beef to Burger King, U.S. Foodservice, Sysco, Jewels and Avendra. The owner Dave Duerson, ex-Chicago Bears standout and Notre Dame Graduate, began his food venture in 1997 under Fair Oaks Farms where they were a prime vender to the McDonalds Corporation.

In May 2003, Dave opened his \$22 million, 75,000 square foot state-of-the-art USDA approved facility. He was interested in exporting his products abroad and sought FAS's assistance. FAS's goal in working with Duerson Foods is to increase U.S. exports of his products and to ensure Dave's successful participation in FAS exports programs as a minority participant and in the export market.

■ **FAS Participates in Council of State Governments Conference:** In 2003, the FAS International Trade Policy Office briefed select state legislators and elected State government officials on recent trade developments under the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Cancun meetings. Since 1933, the Council has championed excellence in state government by



tracking national trends and innovations, and advocating multi-state problem solving. The Council's Agricultural and Rural Policy Committee works to address key agricultural issues of its members. In this session, FAS was asked to provide insight into overall exports and trade developments with China, Cuba, and WTO.

■ **FAS Briefed Small Exporters Trade Working Group:** In 2003, OOEa provided a briefing to 40-plus members of the Small-Medium Sized Exporters (SME) Trade Working Group. The Group is chaired by Congressman Donald Manzullo of Illinois and includes government, legislative, and private sector trade group representatives. The 100-plus member group seeks to promote an SME-friendly regulatory and government trade environment and in turn work to grow new markets for SMEs. The Group sought FAS input on "How to Get Middle America Involved in Exporting." FAS reviewed related export programs and services and highlighted a history of outreach and export promotion initiatives designed to engage more small companies to export.

OOEA addressed leaders from over 45 World Trade Centers (WTC) in 2003. The WTCs promote and centralize services and resources that help small and medium-sized businesses to compete internationally. There are 350 centers around the world with an international network of over 750,000 members. The WTC leaders were keenly interested in USDA's Emerging Markets, Cochran, and trade show/mission programs. These WTCs offer USDA long-term partnerships to promote trade, enhance exporter assistance to agricultural companies, and create grassroots support for new trade policy initiatives.

■ **FAS Participates in Council of State Governments Conference (CSG):** In 2003, OOEa addressed the CSG's Agriculture & Rural Policy Task Force at their annual meeting. CSG is a non-profit, non-partisan organization promoting excellence in state government. Members of the Task Force included state legislators, state agriculture directors and private sector representatives. FAS provided an overview of ongoing trade negotiations, trade developments, and the importance of agricultural trade to the states. CSG Task Force members expressed concern about Brazil's competitiveness in soybeans and meat, growing anti-Americanism in key markets, level of U.S. support for GMO products during WTO negotiations, and country of origin labeling issues.

OOEA met with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Senior Trade Advisor to discuss the Chamber's trade education campaign in 2003. The Chamber's long-standing, and nationally recognized trade education program is called TradeRoots. To date, the program has targeted 27 states and 66 congressional districts for supporting events. TradeRoots is designed to build grassroots support for trade and create support in the U.S. Congress.

The program's success is the result of a sustained and proactive national campaign that partners with governors, Federal agency, state, and community leaders to conduct targeted, highly publicized local events. These events often feature high-ranking private and public officials portraying common messages on the importance of trade and bolstered by local success stories. The Chamber is exploring partnering options with USDA as to a trade education campaign involving agricultural trade.



■ **National Minority Enterprise Development (MED) 2001 Conference:** The Minority Business Development Agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) and the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) hosted the 2001 MED Week Conference in Washington, D.C. The theme was “Strategies for Growth in the American Economy.” Workshops focused on exporting, infrastructure, and business development. Other participants emphasized the importance of Trade Promotion Authority, particularly for small companies to access foreign markets, since approximately 80 percent of all U.S. exporters are minority sole proprietorships. The conference provided an excellent forum for networking among minority small businesses and key government and corporate personnel.

■ **National Nutritional Foods Association (NNFA) Trade Show and Convention:** OOEA represented FAS at the NNFA Marketplace 2001, the association’s 64th annual trade show and convention, meeting with domestic producers interested in exporting and international visitors interested in purchasing U.S. products. The show hosted roughly 500 exhibitors, and offered more than 60 educational seminars and workshops in support of the natural food products industry, which has annual sales estimated at \$45 billion.

The National Nutritional Foods Association, founded in 1936, represents the interests of some 3,000 retailers and 1,000 manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors of health foods, dietary supplements, natural ingredient cosmetics, and other natural products.

■ **FAS Familiarizes Florida Partners with Export Programs:** In 2001, OOEA and the Southern United States Trade Association briefed specialists from the Florida Export Assistance Centers of the U.S. Commercial Service and the Florida Department of Agriculture on USDA export programs and information resources. The purpose of the ongoing training is two-fold:

- (1) To strengthen partnership between state and Federal service providers, streamline collaboration and enhance communication; and
- (2) To utilize DOC’s field staff to help educate potential U.S. agricultural exporters on export programs.

FAS’s objective is to increase the U.S. market share of trade in food products by proactively engaging more companies in exporting through increased participation in export programs and familiarization with new and niche-market trade opportunities.

■ **FAS Collaborates with the Foreign Commercial Service to Expand Export Opportunities:** FAS and the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service (CS) play a critical role in serving U.S. export interests at home and abroad. To provide U.S. food and agricultural companies with complete customer service, maximize the number of U.S. companies exporting, and capitalize on trade opportunities, FAS and CS committed to increased collaboration. The collaboration included state departments of agriculture, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), USDA traditional and nontraditional trade groups, and other export entities. Standard operating procedures (SOP) were developed to effectively leverage Federal and state resources to assist U.S. food and agricultural businesses.



The purpose of the collaboration is to provide a structured and seamless delivery of export services at the state level to U.S. agricultural companies, particularly small/medium-sized companies. The goal is to utilize the strengths of all relevant organizations to maximize value to the U.S. companies and expand exports while avoiding duplication of effort. A matrix of key agribusiness contacts and service providers was provided to each CS Office.

CS officers working with food companies become familiar with the FAS Exporter Assistance Web site and the key contacts and programs that are available for the exportation of food and agricultural products, including processed foods, fish; forest and natural fibers.

In 2001, OOEa teamed with CS to participate in Senator Byrd's Appalachian-Turkish Trade Project Conference in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The objective of the Conference was to provide export readiness training, seek out creative ways to fund feasibility studies, and provide financing and insurance in supporting Appalachian exports and investment in Turkey. Export credits and marketing assistance were discussed with the participants.

■ **FAS and the Rural Coalition Sponsor Workshops:** In 1999, FAS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement with "The Rural Coalition" (RC) to assist small-scale producers, underserved farmers, and cooperatives to increase their knowledge and participation in exporting. As a result, the RC's 45 cooperatives membership acquired additional knowledge of FAS export programs and the market opportunities abroad. FAS sponsored the RC participation in the Miami Food and Beverage Show and participated in the RC annual workshops. OOEa provided specific guidance to the RC's 250-member delegation on how to export horticultural products to Mexico and guidance on how to utilize the FAS Web site.

■ **FAS Partners with the National Conference of State Legislatures.** FAS and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) have had in place an MOU since 1999 to educate state legislatures, legislative staff, and public policy makers on the importance of agricultural trade, and provide updates on key export issues, policies, and programs. Essential to the agreement is the understanding of NCSL and FAS that each of the state departments of agriculture should be viewed as a full partner with the FAS in the agricultural export development project. The MOU has successfully created a national dialogue on agricultural exports with state legislators.

FAS was successful in raising the profile of agricultural trade issues with the NCSL members. The NCSL has held special sessions on the rural economy. There were two sessions specifically devoted to trade, a major session on the rural economy, and individual meetings with state legislators on agricultural trade issues. Discussions covered a full range of issues including the role of agriculture, health, education, and drug abuse.

Secretary of Agriculture, Ann M. Veneman met with state legislators attending the spring meeting of the NCSL assembly on Federal issues. In her comments, she emphasized the importance of exports to U.S. agriculture and highlighted the values of processed foods, fruits, and vegetables in the US export pictures. The Secretary provided information on the Global Food for Education program. The legislators asked the Secretary questions about incentives for corn production, additional assistance for value added products, and industrial hemp. In



response to questions about rising energy costs, the Secretary noted the potential of bio-mass and ethanol fuels.

■ **FAS Partners with USDA's Rural Development Mission Area to Develop Outreach**

Programs: FAS and Rural Business Cooperative Service began a partnership in 1999 to develop outreach programs to improve the competitiveness of small farms and enhance the sustainability of rural communities. This is accomplished through the coordination in developing producers' capacity to participate in the export markets utilizing the cooperative form of business. FAS presented trade information to RBS personnel at seminars and visited local state offices to discuss export programs and market opportunities. FAS also worked with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives to promote exports through cooperatives.

American Agricultural Trade

■ **Importance of Trade:** The importance of exports to American agriculture cannot be overstated. Exports solidly underpin farm income and support more than 800,000 jobs of which 40 percent are in rural areas. Exports mean jobs that pay higher than average wages and are distributed across many communities and professions. Twenty-five percent of all cash receipts for agriculture come from export markets. Nearly half of U.S. wheat and rice crops are exported, about one-third of soybean and meat production is shipped overseas, and 20 percent of corn crop is exported. Dollar for dollar, the United States exports more corn than cosmetics, more wheat than coal, more bakery products than motorboats, and more fruits and vegetables than household appliances.

Farmers in the United States produce more with the same or even fewer resources than 50 years ago. American farmers must look to foreign markets because production and production capacity are increasing faster than domestic demand. U.S. agricultural exports are expected to reach a near-record \$59 billion in FY 2004, still less than 20 percent of total world agricultural trade. The competitiveness of U.S. food and agricultural sector results from investments made each year by U.S. farmers, the food industry, and the U.S. government. U.S. agricultural trade programs are designed to develop and expand commercial outlets for U.S. commodities and to provide international food assistance.

Trade provides consumers with access to a wider variety of foods at reasonable prices, including those not produced domestically. Since 96 percent of the world's consumers live outside the United States, trade brings items such as tropical fruits, coffee, and exotic cheeses to American consumers. Imports make fresh fruits and vegetables, such as asparagus and grapes, available at affordable prices during winter months. U.S. food processors rely on global markets for many food ingredients, such as cocoa (combined with domestic sugar and dairy products) for chocolate.

■ **Trade Policy:** Agricultural trade throughout the world is changing. Technology and fewer trade restrictions have opened international markets for both buyers and sellers. The United States proposed changes to agricultural and trade policies that continue to block access for U.S.



producers and distort the world's agricultural markets through unfair competition. Keeping up with fluctuations in markets, new and amended regulations, and issues that affect trade is challenging.

The U.S. Proposal for Agricultural Trade Reform is built around the following three points:

- (1) Export Competition - phase-out of direct export subsidies;
- (2) Market Access - elimination of high tariffs;
- (3) Domestic Support – hold trade-distorting domestic support to five percent of the total value of agricultural production during the first phase and ultimately complete elimination of these domestic supports.

■ **Free Trade Agreements:** World agricultural tariffs still average 62 percent, far above the 4 percent level for manufactured goods. The U.S. agricultural market is relatively open for most products, averaging only 12 percent, while the European Union tariffs average 30 percent, and Japan's average 50 percent.

Many developing countries also have very high tariffs. For example, India's average bound tariff is 114 percent. The United States has entered negotiations with 33 democracies in the Western Hemisphere to form a Free Trade of the Americas. The United States has forged bilateral free trade agreements with Israel, Jordan, Singapore, and Chile, and it is committed to securing similar bilateral or regional agreements with Morocco, Central America, and South Africa, among others.

Trade policy reform has the potential to boost prospects for food and agricultural markets in developing countries by stimulating economic growth and development. With access to growing markets, American producers will have greater opportunities to grow and develop their businesses. Successful world agricultural trade policy reform will mean even greater access to the bounty of global markets.

Forest Service (FS)

■ **Cooperative Forestry Program:** In 2003, the Cooperative Forestry helped landowners manage almost 4 million acres of private forestlands, and helped protect over 170,000 acres of working private forestlands.

■ **Involving and Assisting Underserved Groups:** FS provided significant financial support for technical tree nursery training for Native Americans; follow-up assistance; and translating technical journals, worksheets, and other publications into Spanish for educating Hispanic youth and the Hispanic work force and general populations. Funding has been provided to allow for training in every county in Mississippi for all forest landowners, targeting the small farmers and African-American landowners.



■ **Small Farms and Landowners Conference:** FS provided technical and financial support to the Small Farms Conference, held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, October 2002. This conference provided technical information to community-based organizations, bankers, universities, and others that provide ongoing assistance to small and limited-resource farmers, woodland owners, and other USDA customers.

■ **National Black Farmers Association Conference:** FS provided technical and financial support to the November 2003 Conference, held in Falls Church, Virginia. The conference theme was “Come and Change Your Future.” This conference provided information to small and limited-resource farmers, ranchers, and other USDA customers.

■ **Forest Taxation Network:** FS provides technical expertise and coordination in the area of timber taxation. Members of an FS Forest Taxation Team conduct educational workshops and assist others to hold workshops around the country for tax professionals and landowners.

In 2003, the FS team helped conduct over a dozen workshops nationwide. The team works with university and private partners to produce technical publications such as “Estate Planning for Forest Landowners”, “Forest Landowners Guide to the Federal Income Tax”, and “Tax Tips for Forest Landowners”. FS supports a National Timber Tax Web site, www.timbertax.org/, which provides leading-edge technical information to the public.

During 2003, the team also worked to revise the “Estate Planning” publication and expects to publish that report in 2004. FS also facilitates a National Forest Taxation Network. The network exchanges information and research on forest taxation research and legislation. In addition, the network held its annual meeting in Washington, D.C., and hosted an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) panel on timber taxation issues in process with the IRS.

■ **Dissemination of Information to Nonindustrial Private Forest (NIPF) Landowners:** In cooperation with State Foresters, FS has developed the National Network of Private Forest Landowners (NNPFL). These groups hold meetings and network with other landowner associations to benefit America’s 10 million private forestland owners.

■ **Assistance to Underserved Communities:** Through Rural Community Assistance programs and other programs, the FS provided direct financial, technical, and organizational assistance to over 215 tribes and minority communities to improve their economic stability.

■ **Program for Native American Students:** Working with a variety of partners, FS provided funding to develop a training model for the exchange of Native American High School students between Alaska and Hawaii. The financial assistance was coupled with technical assistance in both States to help locate and develop training sites for the exchange. The success of this model will determine future support for expanding this project.

■ **Public Outreach Toolkit:** A public outreach toolkit developed by FS is available on its Web site. It explains how FS and State program managers can reach all segments of society, including underserved populations and communities, so that programs and activities are accessible to all who qualify. It is also a guide to increase awareness of agency expectations and to enhance community outreach efforts.



■ **Information and Resources for Private Forest Landowners:** FS supported the development of www.privateforest.org by the Nature Conservancy. This Web site provides information and resources to private forest landowners on conservation management and best practices on private forestlands. It has an extensive library and on-line discussion forum.

■ **Urban Area Outreach:** In FY 2001, the Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) program provided direct assistance to 11,021 communities (more than 39 percent of nation's total). States reported that 2,201 communities now have sustainable urban forestry programs (nearly 300 more than reported in FY 2000). Over 1.6 million volunteer hours were generated for tree surveys, planting and improvement activities; for every Federal program dollar allocated, \$3.46 is leveraged in cash or in-kind services.

With leadership from the National Urban and Community Forestry Council, FS initiated a national campaign to create awareness and engage citizens in active volunteer work to protect, establish, and care for trees, forests, and greenspace. The Web site, www.communitytrees.org, encourages people to "Bring Life to Your Community" through the planting and care of trees.

Digitized satellite imagery and internet mapping were used to assess the condition of the urban forest and critical ecological resources in urban areas to develop comprehensive management plans. This work has fostered a broader understanding of the benefits of urban forests among local policymakers and strengthened local budgets for those programs in Reno, Nevada; Las Vegas, Nevada; Birmingham, Alabama; Colorado Front Range communities; Wilmington-Newark, Delaware; Houston, Texas; and, others.

From declining inner-city neighborhoods to increasingly fragmented rural forests, a new emphasis on linking and managing the Nation's "green" infrastructure will enable the agency and the UCF Program to work effectively across the landscape with other Federal, State, and local partners to contribute to and build more sustainable communities. Opportunities exist, through the UCF program, to put people to work improving their communities through industrial land reclamation and urban forest restoration activities. The partnerships created and fostered by this program have the capacity to coordinate and manage efforts that will result in more vibrant and healthy communities across America.

■ **Support for the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA):** FS has continued the multi-year partnership with NEA to provide grants to underserved rural communities in targeted States/regions that have the potential to combine natural resources, the arts, and rural development. This grant program has been very effective in attracting proposals from tribes and minority communities that do not typically respond to programs associated with natural resource management agencies.

Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA)

GIPSA continues its outreach activities to help ensure that farmers, ranchers, and marketers are aware of its services and programs. GIPSA sponsors or participates in outreach activities such as meetings, industry presentations, and conferences that bring the Agency into contact with small farmers and ensures open access to the Agency's information and programs.



- **Minority Science Conferences:** GIPSA participates in, supports and funds the National Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences Conference, and the annual Black Farmers Conference.
- **Intern Programs:** GIPSA hires interns from various universities and programs, including the Washington Internship Program for Native American Students, D.C. Federal Jobs Initiative, D.C. Summerworks Program, Washington Internship Program for Disabled Students, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and the Tribal Colleges Initiative.
- **Scholarship Programs:** GIPSA provides monetary and employment assistance to minority students through the 1890 Scholarship Program, the GIPSA Scholarship Program, and the USDA Public Service Leaders Scholarship.
- **Minority and Small Agri-Businesses:** GIPSA supports and collaborates with the Tennessee Outreach Council providing support to minority and women-owned small agricultural businesses.
- **University Funding Support:** GIPSA provides ongoing support and funding for the Regulatory Science Program at the University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff. Funding provided by the Agency supports curriculum development, faculty, and student recruitment. GIPSA also supports and funds the Beginning Agricultural Youth Opportunity Unlimited (BAYOU) Program at the Southern University and A&M College, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, which provides opportunities for high school students to gain first hand knowledge of the career opportunities in agriculture, and family and consumer services.
- **Native Americans:** GIPSA coordinates the USDA American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), and co-chairs the USDA/AIHEC Leadership Group. Through these programs, USDA collaborates with AIHEC institutions and provide technical assistance to Native Americans to enhance the capability of American Indians to attain educational excellence and to contribute positively to the fulfillment of USDA's mission.
- **Educational Materials:** To facilitate and standardize marketing, GIPSA has developed extensive multimedia educational CDs to educate and train producers, official inspection offices, grain handling and processing firms, foreign grain buyers, government agencies, and educational institutions about grain grading.
- **Excess Property Donations to Schools:** GIPSA donates excess property, including computers and laboratory equipment, to local high schools, Hispanic American Colleges and Universities, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.
- **Hotline:** GIPSA maintains a toll-free telephone hotline (1-800-998-3447) to provide producers with direct access to GIPSA to express concerns, record complaints, or provide information about possible violations of the United States Grain Standards Act, the Agricultural Marketing Act, or the Packers and Stockyards Act.
- **GIPSA Web site:** GIPSA maintains a Web site (www.usda.gov/gipsa/) to provide farmers, ranchers, and others with extensive information on GIPSA's services and programs.



Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

ALABAMA

- In August 2003, NRCS staff met with leaders of American Indians Tribes in Alabama to raise their awareness of USDA conservation programs. Thirty-six participants from 7 tribes attended.
- In December 2002, the Northwest Alabama Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) worked with the Hunters Helping the Hungry program to process more than 2 tons of venison to feed needy residents. Processors were paid one dollar per pound to process the venison into deer burger.
- In May 2002, NRCS staff and the Poarch Creek Indian Tribe signed an agreement to assure protection of the Tribe's cultural resources, traditional cultural properties, sacred sites, and properties of cultural interest when NRCS plans and implements conservation practices on reservation land.

ALASKA

- In December 2001, NRCS staff co-hosted a 3-day non-timber forest products conference that addressed issues including traditional resource uses, biological sustainability, small business startups, and the social, ethical, and spiritual aspects of non-timber forest products. The conference, held in Anchorage, provided opportunities for landowners, scientists, educators, and community economic development officers to strengthen cultural ties between urban and rural Alaska.

ARIZONA

- In September 2002, NRCS representatives joined officials from across USDA to consult with members of the Navajo Nation. Discussions covered the 2002 Farm Bill, drought, new agricultural technology, rural development, education, homeland security, and agricultural marketing. This Department-wide event, held in Window Rock, was the first time all areas of USDA have formally consulted with a Native American Tribe.

CALIFORNIA

- In March 2003, USDA and NRCS officials joined more than 250 minority, limited resource, and beginning farmers at a Farm Bill Forum in Fresno. Representatives from USDA, the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts, and the NRCS Earth Team volunteers made presentations, staffed booths, and distributed materials. The event was simultaneously translated into the Spanish, Hmong, and Laotian languages. Participants celebrated successes of African-American and Hmong farmers.
- In March 2003, NRCS staff, the agency's Earth Team volunteers, and others hosted a conference on American Indian Education. NRCS presenters described how American Indians gather plants and tend the landscape. Other discussions featured historical horticultural



techniques and products that are still used today by California Indian people to manage land. More than 900 people attended the event held in Santa Clara. The event inspired the Warner Unified School District from southern California to begin plans to set up an American Indian school program in conjunction with the Los Coyotes reservation. School representatives hope to see the program include student-managed native plant projects.

■ NRCS officials and other USDA agencies held a job fair in Fresno that attracted 500 local persons of Hmong and Southeast Asian descent. NRCS worked with local Hmong radio stations and other media to notify the public about the event. Since the fair, NRCS's Fresno office has received many e-mails from job-seekers. NRCS personnel have visited schools and colleges to increase awareness of the agency and its opportunities.

■ NRCS staff and KBIF Radio in Fresno began a half hour call-in program, "Asian American Specialty Crop Radio." The show, hosted by an NRCS soil conservationist, provides Hmong, Mien, and Lao farming communities in California's Central Valley, with soil and water conservation information covering topics like soil texture, drip irrigation, composting, and the 2002 Farm Bill.

■ In July 2002, NRCS staff and California State University at Fresno held an outreach workshop on sticky corn, a specialty crop in Southeast Asia. An NRCS soil conservationist provided translation in the Hmong language and covered workshop topics including plant nutrition, soil testing, drip irrigation, and soil fertility. NRCS staff and volunteers were on hand to help with harvesting and presentations.

GEORGIA

■ In August 2003, NRCS staff presented 5 pounds of "Trail of Tears" corn seed stock to the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. NRCS grew the corn from rare seed stock propagated from original seed carried by American Indians during the infamous Cherokee Trail of Tears diaspora of 1838-39.

NEW MEXICO

■ NRCS and the Mescalero Apache Tribe established a Tribal office. The office provides the Tribe easy access to technical assistance, contributing to the Tribe's reputation for outstanding best management practices on its forest lands. A partnership of NRCS, the Tribe, and the Otero Soil and Water Conservation District has led to forest and range improvements on more than 300,000 acres.

The Tribe has two Environmental Quality Incentives Program contracts to complete forest stand improvements and thin juniper in a watershed in order to return water to a large dry spring. The Tribe's conservation efforts are so well known in New Mexico that the State Senate has proposed that a special fund, or joint memorial, be established to support New Mexico's forest health plan.



PENNSYLVANIA

■ NRCS staff in Lancaster County helped Amish farmers improve water quality and the health of their herds. NRCS and its local partners held field days to show Amish farmers how to prevent cows from polluting stream and how removing small dams improves natural stream flow. Workdays have brought together Amish farmers, government agencies, and outdoor organizations to plant trees as buffers along streams to prevent soil erosion.

As farmers have seen improvements in herd health, acceptance for conservation practices has grown. One Amish farmer who worked with NRCS persuaded his neighbors to implement water quality improvement practices. He also has designed and installed his own fish run to maintain fish through the winter and is forming a watershed organization to monitor water quality and promote adoption of conservation practices.

SOUTH CAROLINA

■ In October 2002, NRCS South Carolina Outreach Coordinator met with State leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to inform them about 2002 Farm Bill programs and services the agency has for owners of small farms. NRCS distributed farm bill information to the presidents of 85 NAACP chapters in the State.

■ The Edisto Savannah Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council and the South Carolina Department of Social Services provided employed welfare program graduates with used cars at zero-interest loans. Six other RC&D areas in South Carolina have started similar projects. Initially, 85 cars will be placed by September 2005, with prospects for an additional 35 to 40 more vehicles being placed. Clients receiving cars will be responsible for repaying loans, vehicle maintenance, and maintaining adequate insurance on their cars.

SOUTH DAKOTA

■ In August 2002, NRCS, Rural Development, and Farm Service Agency officials met with American Indian leaders throughout South Dakota to discuss the 2002 Farm Bill and how USDA can improve assistance to Tribes. Discussions focused on water conservation practices available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

■ In October 2002, NRCS officials and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe signed a cultural resources agreement through which the Tribe will be reimbursed by NRCS for all archeological investigations and consultations performed by certified tribal personnel. In return, NRCS will be notified of all findings and retains ultimate responsibility for all cultural resource determinations. This new agreement is the first of its kind between NRCS and a Tribe.

Risk Management Agency (RMA)

■ The RMA has an extensive network of public and private sector partnerships annually generating new market driven insurance products and educational initiatives. This network



provides reinsurance to companies to sale and service 1.2 million policies covering 217 million insured acres, 100+ commodities and provides farmers with over \$40 billion in risk protection (RMA Summary of Business Report, 2003 crop year).

As cited in a USDA press release dated October 8, 2003, RMA Administrator Ross J. Davidson, Jr., said that through these partnerships, “women, minority, limited resource and other traditionally undeserved agricultural producers will receive assistance in understanding and using risk management tools to improve their economic viability.”

■ RMA’s Office of Civil Rights and Outreach ensures equal access and accessibility to small and limited-resource farmers and ranchers. It also collaborates with 1890, 1994, and 1862 Land-Grant Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Community Based Organizations and State and Federal Agencies, to implement initiatives to better serve small and limited resource farmers and ranchers.

RMA has been busy partnering with outreach groups to provide producers with new risk management skills. In 2003, RMA used \$5 million to educate women, limited resource and other traditionally underserved farmers and ranchers through forty-nine competitively awarded partnerships with community based, educational and non-profit organizations.

FY 2003 Highlights-Community Outreach and Assistance Partnerships

■ **The Second National Survival Strategies for Small And Limited Resource Farmers and Ranchers Conference** was held in San Diego, California, in October 2003. This conference provided a forum for networking and forming alliances between public and private stakeholders to maximize their effectiveness in assisting small and limited resource farmers and ranchers to survive in the current risk environment.

Over 300 participants from Hawaii, American Samoa, Virgin Islands and 35 other states received information on production, marketing, financial, legal, human resources and alternative enterprises from agriculture leaders through 32 workshops. Scholarship participants agreed to coordinate and conduct training at the local level upon returning home and use the materials and strategies they learned at the Conference.

■ **Rural Coalition-Enhancing the Economic Viability of Small Farmers:** RMA provided a 2-hour risk management insurance program presentation at Rural Coalition’s Kick-off Meeting held in Yakima, Washington, which also included a local media press conference that included panel interviews to Rural Coalition representatives and several local small-limited resource farmers and ranchers. Rural Coalition also hosted town hall meetings, workshops, and other events in California and Mississippi. The Coalition is working with insurance industry partners to train insurance agents on the delivery of crop insurance and other products, train partner organizations to develop financial risk funds as a management tool, and to better assist small and limited resource farmers by providing a quality, customer service that is needed.



■ **North Alabama Risk Management Education Program, Alabama A&M University:**

This partnership seeks to increase agricultural producers' participation in crop insurance programs, and to assist them in coping with risk and increasing uncertainty in yields, prices, and overall farm income. Farmers with access to risk management information and the knowledge to use it have the key to profitably operating a farm business. However, many small and limited resource farmers often struggle to find and use relevant information.

The outreach project developed training materials about risk management education and strategies for risk management. A number of training modules and fact sheets for producers and extension personnel have been developed, and can be found at the Small Farms Research Center's Web site at www.aamu.edu/smallfarmers/. A total of 56 extension agents and agricultural specialists, and 181 farmers and ranchers have benefited from these workshops. This training has been used to develop alternative enterprises and help sustain family farms.

■ **Georgia Organics-Outreach to Underserved Organic Specialty Crop Growers:** This partnership delivered instructional training to minority, small, beginning, and limited resource farmers on the opportunities in organics as well as in-depth workshops on tools that help farmers with daily production, marketing and financial decisions. Two outreach sessions on the topic of Opportunities in Organic Medicinal Herb Production and Marketing were presented at conferences of partnering organizations that include underserved farmers and agribusiness professionals. The 2004 GORD (Georgia Organics Resource Directory), an important educational and outreach tool for those working with organic and sustainable agriculture, will be published in conjunction with this outreach program at www.georgiaorganics.org.

■ **Fort Valley State University:** The objectives of the cooperative agreement are to develop comprehensive training activities to educate small and limited-resource landowners, and others, as to the current and future value of their land, and to ensure that small and limited-resource farmers, via collaborative outreach efforts, have access to information available to help them manage their land in a sustainable manner.

■ **Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund:** The objectives of the cooperative agreement are to provide outreach to African-American, small, and limited-resource farmers on select legal risks they may face that can impact sustained agriculture production and farmland preservation and succession, and to implement a comprehensive outreach program that will give underserved farmers the tools necessary to make sound decisions as they relate to the preservation and succession of their farm operations and land.

The Federation held their 21st Annual Black Farmers Marketing Conference and Trade Show in Albany, Georgia, and topics included heir property ownership and land preservation alternatives, land use – enhancing your forestry/farm management on your land, and choosing a business entity for your farm/forestry operation. The Federation provides training sessions in identifying and introducing minority insurance agents to the economics of crop insurance and to the Reinsured Companies that administer agent contracts in an effort to increase minority agent representation.



■ **Women in Blue Jeans Conference:** This organization provides networking opportunities, support, and risk management education for women in agriculture and farmers' wives in the agricultural industry through a 2-day conference. This year's Conference was held in Mitchell, South Dakota, and was a huge success. There were approximately 266 women from 8 different states in attendance. Concurrent sessions included various topics on Agri-business, Family Health, Personal, Leisure, and Home-based businesses. Their brochure stated, "RMA believes in the value of women to successful farms, families, and communities, and is proud to be a partner of the Women in Blue Jeans Committee".

■ **Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Training:** RMA and Michigan State University are partnering to assist small farmers in pest management through a 16-week course primarily geared to blueberry producers in western Michigan. After completion, producers are certified as IPMs. During one of the sessions, RMA addressed various insurance products with special emphasis on the Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) product, how to make an insurance decision, and broad based risk management training on how to integrate insurance, marketing and production risks within the risk bearing capacity of the farm. (Note: AGR is an innovative "whole farm" revenue pilot program that provides coverage for diversified cropping systems, along with limited coverage for livestock as part of a crop-livestock operation).

■ **Small Farms Conference in Michigan:** RMA participated in the Michigan Small Farm Conference in Lansing, Michigan, and provided information on crop insurance for small and limited resource farmers. The AGR Pilot or whole farm revenue program in western Michigan was one of the main topics at the meeting and other producers were interested in blueberry insurance coverage.

■ **Organic Outreach: Delivering Demonstration, Peer Mentoring and Buyer Education as Risk-Reducing Strategies for Organic Producers.** This project will:

- (1) Work to expand an organic farmer mentor program;
- (2) Create organic demonstration projects across Minnesota;
- (3) Produce and disseminate organic processing fact sheets to expand value-added and marketing options for growers; and
- (4) Disseminate a diversification option evaluation tool to growers and agricultural advisors. Nonprofit groups, farmer organizations, and a State Task Force will partner with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture on this multi-part project.

■ **Sustainable Agriculture Education (SAGE) Market Development and Land Access for Underserved Specialty Crop Producers:** SAGE is creating and fostering new marketing opportunities in the diverse San Francisco Bay Area by conducting their *Annual Agriculture Roots Fair* and providing a study for Urban Edge Agricultural Parks that are envisioned to serve as multi-functional entities that could provide a stable, yet aesthetic landscape for recreational and educational opportunities for surrounding communities.

■ **Breaking Down Barriers for Hmong-Lao Farmers:** RMA has an ongoing working relationship with Hmong-Lao farmers in North Carolina. In partnership with the Hmong-Lao Assistance Association, Inc., RMA attended the 9th *Annual Hmong Conference* and spoke on a



panel discussing USDA farm programs and career opportunities in the Department. In attendance were representatives from the USDA Office of Civil Rights and USDA's National Asian Program Manager. Multiple barriers were broken during this exciting event.

■ **Northern New England Small and Beginning Farmers Conference:** RMA attended this conference supported by the Beginning Farmers of New Hampshire organization. Over 100 new and beginning farmers attended this conference to learn about RMA's AGR program and discuss organic farming issues.

■ **First Annual National Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers Conference:** RMA partnered with The Texas/Mexico Border Coalition to host the *First Annual National Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers Conference* in San Antonio, Texas. Producers primarily of Hispanic origin were invited to participate in this intensive conference. Breakout sessions included topics such as Alternative Enterprises, Financial Management and Environmental Risk Management.

■ **The University of Arkansas** project will provide risk management education assessment and training among *Non-Reservation First Nation Producers*, which will introduce risk management strategies to Native American producers. The project focuses on the Cherokee and Choctaw tribes. After going through the protocol and establishing a dialog with the tribal leaders last year, the project coordinators have put together a great educational handbook entitled "How Risky Are You?" This was distributed to 700 producers.

The handbook allows producers to do a risk analysis of their individual operation, provides specific crop insurance information for Arkansas and Oklahoma, and identifies specific strategies for production, marketing, finance, legal and human risk that are unique to their farming and ranching operations.

FY 2002 Highlights-Community Outreach and Assistance Partnerships

During FY 2002, customized regional and local workshops were held in several regions to deliver proven survival strategies directly to producers. Forty-five competitively awarded partnerships with community-based, educational, and nonprofit organizations used \$3.2 million to educate women, limited-resource, and other traditionally underserved farmers and ranchers.

■ **Team Agriculture Georgia (TAG):** TAG, a partnership comprised of representatives from Federal and state agencies, state educational institutions, and nongovernment agricultural organizations, gives small and underserved producers the opportunity to attend educational sessions with topics adapted to the needs specific to the area surrounding the location of the workshop. TAG sponsored both spring and fall workshops targeting small and limited resource farmers and ranchers.

The education sessions for both the spring workshop in Tifton, Georgia, and fall workshop in Waco, Georgia, addressed topics ranging from obtaining financing to how to market a commodity once it is produced. Nontraditional farming is emphasized. TAG has addressed a growing need in Georgia by delivering a complete set of sessions conducted in Spanish and



providing information useful to Hispanic attendees who are interested in starting a farming operation of their own.

■ **Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SAWG):** SAWG links over 120 diverse organizations and hundreds of individuals throughout the 13 Southern states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. The objectives of the cooperative agreement with RMA is to implement a unique and innovative outreach and assistance program to improve the economic viability of underserved small to-moderate producers of organic horticultural products in the South.

Southern SAWG commissioned a production team to videotape two producers who were at various stages of production and marketing and applying specific risk management strategies on their farms to reduce losses and increase profits. The tapes are used as a training tool for other producers throughout the Region.

SAWG also created a highly participatory *Learning Network* of a diverse group of experienced organic horticultural crop producers/trainers; they created written farm profiles of 10 initial *Learning Network* participants for electronic posting to their Web site and use in training venues; and they developed and conducted farmer-to-farmer training at the Southern SAWG Annual Conference and Trade Show in Mobile, Alabama. Three hundred people attended the conference.

■ **Marketing Opportunities for Small Farms in Washington State:** Several regional press releases have recognized RMA's partner, Washington State Department of Agriculture, and the success of the project and the four Farm-to-Cafeteria forums held throughout the State.

Many of the articles shared an overview of the project and the 87-page handbook, "Farm-to-Cafeteria Connections: Marketing Opportunities for Small Farms in Washington State." The handbook explains how to start a farm-to-cafeteria program and includes numerous resources and case studies of successful projects. It is a guide for farmers, food service professionals, and communities, and provides a how-to approach to direct farm selling to school districts, colleges, hospitals, nursing homes, restaurant owners, prisons, and private businesses. Handbooks are available at <http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/>.

■ **Heifer International:** This 18-month project with RMA established a Pacific Northwest based office and Immigrant Farming Program Advisory Board, organized a National Immigrant Farming Initiative Steering Committee, and implemented several outreach activities for immigrant farmers in Washington State. One of the most significant elements of the project is the completion of the New Entry Sustainable Farming Program, providing an initial design of the components and analysis for the adaptation for immigrant farming practices.

Currently, with assistance from RMA, Heifer International has plans to extend this project into California. A special presentation on Heifer International and its establishment in the Pacific Northwest was included on a 1-hour TV news magazine show, *Primer Impacto* on Univision TV,



which has one of the highest viewer-ship ratings in the United States and in 12 Latin American countries for American immigrants.

■ **Working with Farm Women to Reach Orchard Families in Crisis (Farm Family Support Network):** RMA, in collaboration with Washington State University Cooperative Extension and local social service representatives in the Wenatchee Valley area, established and coordinated a schedule to provide a resource-support telephone assistance service for area farm producers. Farmers in Chelan and Okanogan counties are eligible for the free confidential consulting service to help them decide how to better manage their farming operation or help in analyzing the farming operation and develop decision making and planning tools needed for success. Producers are advised to contact 1-800-469-2981 to request services.

The project proved to be an added plus for RMA when the BSE (mad cow) outbreak occurred in December 2003. RMA's Spokane Regional Office received numerous inquiries when the outbreak happened and they were able to share with media, politicians, and others about this Farm Support Network, which provides counseling, advice, and resource references to farm families in this crisis.

■ **Fort Peck Tribal College:** This partnership created a Risk Management Education for American Indian Producers "Train the Trainer" Workshop, which was held in Bozeman, Montana. This project provided underserved agricultural producers in the three states region of Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to make informed risk management decisions for their operations. Approximately 20 representatives from various tribes attended.

■ **Tilling the Soils of Opportunity:** This partnership between the Michigan Integrated Food and Farming Systems, Inc., and RMA provided a comprehensive risk management program to traditionally underserved farmers in southwest and western Michigan. This partnership assisted traditionally underserved farmers increase the economic viability of their farming operations by incorporating risk management tools and techniques into their business strategies.

■ **Growing Power - Building Capacity: A Workshop for Limited Resource Farmers** was an intensive hands-on training workshop focusing on risk management strategies for farmers who are short on money, space, and other resources. Approximately 25 limited resource farmers attended each of the workshops conducted at the Growing Power site in Wisconsin throughout the year. Attendees came from as far as New York and California. The 2-acre site contains 6 greenhouses; pens of chickens, ducks, goats, and rabbits; a direct market outlet for local produce; and working demonstrations of aquaponics, beekeeping, and vermicomposting.

An RMA Specialist who attended this training said, "I cannot fully express how impressed I was with Growing Power's program. Through their efforts, RMA Outreach Funds are truly providing training that makes a direct impact on the lives of limited-resource and minority producers." Trainers attended the workshop and gathered information to share with local producers when they return to their communities.



■ **Agriculture & Land Based Training Association (ALBA) Farmer Education Program for Beginning Farmers** is a bilingual, multi-year training curriculum for Spanish-speaking farmers consisting of evening classroom courses, field trips, and field days which include crop planning, soil fertility, land preparation, irrigation systems, weed control, plant nutrition, pest and disease control, packing and post-harvest handling, land evaluation and renting options, and individual farm plans. After successful completion of the program, participants received a ½ acre parcel of land to implement their hands-on and classroom experiences.

■ **Coronado Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc. - Risks of Developing Agricultural Enterprises on Tribal Land:** Training was provided to give the members of the Tohona O'odham Nation, a rural community of southeast Arizona, the necessary skills to evaluate their agribusiness operations in the development of an operational business plan, obtain crop insurance protection, meet financial obligations, and successful product marketing. The Coronado RCD will be expanding their training to include other training topics such as farmers markets, financing, and USDA programs. Their audience is reaching out to more tribes that include the San Carlos Apache and the San Xavier Nations.

■ **Small Farm Today –19th National Small Farm Trade Show and Conference:** This year's theme was "Thinking Outside the Box Sustainability." Ideas and information on income opportunities for the small family farm were presented in 21, 1-hour seminars and 6, 3-hour short courses. Both the traditional and alternative farm enterprises were covered for full and part-time farmers, ranchers and others.

■ **Tufts University -The New Entry Sustainable Farming Project:** This project provided training and technical assistance to new immigrant producers through a mentor farm process. The project has assisted Cambodian, Laotians, Hmongs, and other Asian refugees in Massachusetts to market their native vegetables to some of New York City's finest restaurants managed by the city's top chefs. This ensures that the producers receive top dollar and a consistent market for their products, while the restaurant receives fresh, high quality produce for their dishes. The success of this venture could lead to additional markets in the Northeast.

One of the notable mentors for this Project was Mr. John Ogonowski, who was a pilot on one of the hijacked planes on September 11th. As a result of his commitment to this Project, producers continue to use a portion of his home farm as a training site.

■ **Concentric Management Applications - Meat Goat An Alternative Livestock Production as a Tool for Risk Management:** This group developed a model to assist meat goat producers in marketing their product and a tool to provide training on production and marketing meat goats. This analytical tool assists producers in planning strategies that will insure best management practices are in place to manage an effective and efficient operation. The project provided over 30 demonstration projects through the southeast reaching over 450 producers. The success of the project has sparked interest in the western states.

■ **Kentucky State University (KSU) - Small Farmer Risk Management Education Project** has provided educational training to over 1,200 of Kentucky's small producers through one-on-one training (150 producers) and in classrooms, conferences, and churches. In addition to crop



insurance, training is also provided on estate planning, livestock and crop production, record keeping, budgeting, and marketing skills. The University also sponsors a “Third Thursday Thing” Sustainable Agriculture Monthly Workshop at the KSU Research Farm to provide training in all aspects of farming, including crop insurance. By implementing the risk management training offered by KSU, small farmers have reportedly increased their farm income by \$10,000 and reduced their expenditures by an average of \$1,500.

■ **University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff - Risk Management Assistance for Women, Limited Resource and Underserved Farmers in the Delta.** This project provided one-on-one training on financial, production, legal, and marketing risk management strategies to 200 producers. Emphasis was on creating balance sheets for loan applications and establishing a computer database. Producers also received training on analyzing budgets to identify cost of production, and net income per acre and training on utilizing RMA’s “Premium Calculator.”

■ **Virginia State University - Financial Management and Crop Insurance Training for Agricultural Professionals Who Work with Underserved Producers:** The project provided farm financial management training and record keeping using the FINPACK computer software package, and crop insurance training to over 90 agricultural professionals in 3 sessions held across the country. The participants were provided a computer application package so that they could provide onsite farm assistance using a laptop computer. This enabled them to assist about 2,000 producers in developing business plans that may be used to plan, analyze, and implement strategies to improve their financial stability. It also creates a computer record database to be used in securing financial assistance.

■ **Greenmarkets in New York City:** The partnership with RMA allows them to administer the New Farmer Development Project that assists new farmers (primarily Latino immigrants) to acquire farms of their own. The project coordinators provide strategic training in handling of production, financial, marketing, and legal risk associated with farming in the area. The program serves an average of 60 producers a year throughout the New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania metropolitan area. The program has helped place over 25 producers on farms and assisted 4 producers in becoming farm owners.

■ **Drake University Agriculture Law Center’s partnership with RMA** has helped establish Food Policy Councils in Iowa, Connecticut, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Utah, and North Carolina, and has drawn interest from several other states. The Councils are made of diverse participants representing nearby agricultural industry and participate in various projects unique to their state.

In addition to helping develop state agricultural policies, the Councils provide opportunities for small and limited resource producers to participate in local and state marketing activities. The Councils also coordinate training opportunities for the agriculture leaders to learn about crop insurance, risk management strategies, and other tools offered by RMA.

For more information on the Risk Management Agency, visit our Web site at www.rma.usda.gov.



USDA National Office of Outreach

The USDA Office of Outreach was established in 1997 to ensure oversight and coordination of USDA's responsibilities in response to listening sessions held around the country. The Office of Outreach provides leadership, coordination, facilitation, and expertise to internal and external partners to ensure equal and timely access to USDA programs for all constituents, with emphasis on the underserved. The Office develops, manages, coordinates, and supports national level outreach initiatives, programs, and activities that provide information, technical assistance, and training to underserved USDA constituents. It also develops and maintains effective vehicles for internal and external coordination and sharing of activities and information, and provides training and technical assistance to the recipients of grants under the Outreach for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program (2501 Program).

Representatives of many communities stated that they are often overlooked when information is released about available USDA programs and services. They also stated that USDA agencies do not make use of minority community organizations and media outlets to be sure all eligible participants know about their programs and services. "Cultural barriers prevent the communication necessary for effective delivery of opportunities at USDA."

The USDA Office of Outreach is encouraging and engaging the participation of USDA agencies, traditional and non-traditional partners, as well as the creation of new partnerships and innovative techniques, that will help ensure greater and equal access to all USDA opportunities, programs and services.

Accomplishments

■ **Agency Outreach Coordinators:** Outreach Coordinators are established in all USDA agencies, and provide ongoing leadership to these Coordinators who are designated by agency heads to plan, lead, and coordinate outreach efforts within their Agency. Additionally, the Office of Outreach reviews agency strategic outreach plans to ensure that they reflect the goals and objectives stated in the USDA Strategic Plan.

■ **Memorandum of Understanding between USDA and Marriott International:** To enhance business opportunities for minority farmers and to expand their business capacity through outreach, technical assistance and training, Marriott International, Inc. (Marriott) and USDA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on March 15, 2004. In this historic venture, Marriott will provide technical assistance and mentoring to participating farmers leading to enhanced production and marketing to the hospitality industry. The Office of Outreach will coordinate USDA and its partners' support for the MOU by identifying financial and other resources, providing information and technical assistance on business development and marketing, and facilitating relationships with USDA agencies and other Federal departments to promote, develop, and assist minority farmers.

■ **Memorandum of Understanding between USDA and Health and Human Resources (HHS):** The purpose of the MOU is to partner with HHS to coordinate policies and activities aimed at improving the economic conditions of immigrants and refugees engaged in farming,



agribusiness, and rural entrepreneurship throughout the United States. HHS has the responsibility for the domestic program or refugee resettlement services that includes case and medical assistance to arriving refugees and a broad range of social services for resettled refugees in the United States for a period under five years. The Office of Outreach will provide leadership and coordination of USDA agencies to provide training and technical assistance on USDA programs and services to refugees. The MOU is in approval status and has not been signed.

■ **Developed the Minority Farm Register:** The purpose of the voluntary Minority Farm Register (MFR) is to create a voluntary listing with names and addresses of minority farm and ranch owners and/or operators. The MFR will be used to target USDA efforts and the effort of its partnerships with community and faith-based organizations, educational institutions and other groups serving minority clientele to promote and establish equal access to USDA farm programs. The Office of Outreach will administer and maintain the MFR cooperatively with the Farm Service Agency. A specific register sign-up form will be issued in English and Spanish. Informational registration materials will be distributed to community and faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and government agencies assisting minorities with land retention and acquisition to ensure the program is widely publicized and accessible.

■ **Regional Grant Writing Workshops:** The Office of Outreach conducted seven regional Grant Writing Workshops to ensure eligible community-based organizations, 1890 and 1994 land grant colleges and universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions and Alaskan Native Cooperatives have access to grants available under Section 2501 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (2501 Program). The purpose of the workshops was to enable organizations to develop successful proposals for potential funding through the 2501 Program. These grants are available to eligible organizations and institutions interested in providing outreach, training, and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

The Workshops were conducted at the University of Texas San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas; Fond Du Lac Tribal College, Cloquet, Minnesota; New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico; Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, Texas; Reedly College, Reedly, California; Imperial Valley College, El Centro, California; and Crown Plaza Airport Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia.

■ **Increased Partnerships:** The Office of Outreach has established strong Partnerships with 1890/1862 Land-Grant Institutions, 1994 Institutions, including Tuskegee University, Indian Tribal Community Colleges and Alaska Native Cooperative Colleges, Hispanic Educational Institutions, other post-secondary educational institutions, community and faith based organizations and other special interest groups that provide training and technical assistance to underserved customers in rural and urban areas. The Office of Outreach facilitates and coordinates training and continuing updates on USDA policy/regulations for partners/stakeholders, assist in planning workshops including coordinating the participation of technical experts, and other pertinent program information from USDA necessary to accomplish workshop objectives.



■ **Environmental Justice (EJ):** The Office of Outreach, along with the USDA EJ Program Manager, represents USDA and participates on the Federal Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Environmental Justice. The IWG is composed of representatives from 14 different Federal agencies and White House offices identified in Executive Order 12898 (“Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” February 11, 1994). The IWG’s primary goal is to work with each Federal agency to integrate environmental justice within its programs, policies, and activities. The Office of Outreach and the EJ Program Manager, through collaboration with USDA agencies, are working with partners to promote local demonstration projects and effectively coordinate and provide information on the range of issues that environmental justice embodies at USDA.

■ **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM):** The Office of Outreach is the lead in coordinating the implementation of the MOU between USDA and NCBM. to work together to improve communications and the delivery of program resources, to provide technical and management assistance, and to identify new initiatives for those areas served by the NCBM members and other rural areas. USDA has identified rural communities and rural areas that have endured decades of poverty among its key priorities in the delivery of its programs. Many of these areas identified are served by NCBM members.

Outreach has successfully assisted small towns with USDA funding for technology centers, community and recreation facilities, fire houses and equipment, water and sewer projects, court houses and libraries and many other projects. Also, the Office of Outreach is engaged in activities to encourage MOUs between mayors and minority institutions to provide training and technical assistance on economic and business development.

■ **National Program for Food Safety:** The Office of Outreach is working with the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) to support a seamless farm-to-table national program for food safety. Outreach assists FSIS in its efforts to communicate and disseminate food safety information to underserved customers. This effort supports USDA’s Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) system that was developed to help eliminate pathogens in the U.S. food supply. To increase the number of rural customers receiving access to this information, Outreach and FSIS are partnering with agricultural colleges and universities.

■ **Training and Technical Assistance to Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (2501) Recipients:** These efforts will continue to reduce delinquency rates of current USDA borrowers, bring more producers into USDA loan programs, and increase the net return to small farmers through financial and farm plan improvements, including increased marketing initiatives. This promotes the continued viability of small farms and the retention of ownership. The 2501 Program was transferred to CSREES on August 15, 2002 (Secretary’s Memorandum 1030-51). Outreach continues to serve as liaison and coordinate the close collaboration between 2501 awardees and USDA agencies that administer agricultural programs targeted for outreach activities under these projects.

■ **Small Town Revitalization Task Force:** The Office of Outreach participates in this initiative through the Environmental Protection Agency and the Interagency Working Group for



Environmental Justice. The Task Force is designed to aid Revitalization Projects by providing insight, information, and access to existing tools and resources both within and outside the Federal Government. There are 15 demonstration projects in this initiative. The projects emphasize collaboration among two or more Federal agencies, State and local governments, Tribal Governments, community-based organizations, academia, non-governmental organizations, and industry. Outreach participates as a USDA representative and coordinates programs and services provided by USDA.

■ **2002 Farm Bill Briefings:** The Office of Outreach, in concert with various other USDA agencies and partners such as land-grant colleges and universities and community-based organizations, facilitated 11 briefings in Virginia, Mississippi, Texas, Puerto Rico, Nebraska, Washington, California, South Dakota, Georgia, New York, and South Carolina. The purpose of the briefings was to reach out to all customers to ensure that they have accurate and up-to-date information on USDA programs and services, and changes brought about by the 2002 Farm Bill.

The briefings were designed to cover most of the major programs at USDA for a general audience, with special emphasis on the underserved, socially disadvantaged, and limited resource customers. These briefings enabled USDA to interact with a broad spectrum of customers such as small farmers, ranchers, landowners, municipalities, community-based organizations, universities, and underserved customers - particularly minorities and women - and become a proactive player in marketing its programs and services. The discussions at the briefings imparted and broke down information contained in the 2002 Farm Bill to a degree understandable by the end users.

■ **Special Projects:** The Office of Outreach coordinates and facilitates funding from USDA agencies for grants to the entities to conduct outreach, training, and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. These projects and special initiatives encourage and assist socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to operate their farms and ranches more efficiently, and to own and retain land. Outreach provides leadership and coordination for strategic educational and networking conferences with internal and external partners to design proactive strategies to assure a viable future for these farmers.

■ **Internal Partnerships with USDA Agencies:** The Office of Outreach facilitates and coordinates training and continuing updates/sessions on USDA policies/regulations for partners/stakeholders and assists in planning conferences, including coordinating the participation of USDA officials, program specialists, and other Federal partners necessary to accomplish the conference/consultation goals and objectives.

■ **Clearinghouse for Unsolicited Proposals:** The Office of Outreach established Departmental Regulation 4360-002 to set Department-wide policy for Outreach. This regulation allows the Outreach to coordinate all requests from non-Federal entities for USDA financial or equivalent in-kind support to conduct activities involving outreach that would further the USDA mission goals and programs.

■ **USDA Agriculture Census and Enumeration Project:** An informal working group, established with assistance from researchers at Tufts University, has been meeting to establish a



broad network comprised of government, non-profit, universities and other partners. The initial goal was to improve the accuracy of the Agriculture Census regarding new immigrant producers. The group has widened the scope to seek new ways to assure that underserved producers are accurately reflected in the Agriculture Census and other information. The Office of Outreach will clarify research and develop priorities, strategies, methods, and define a scope of effort needed to ascertain the number of farmers in these categories. This initiative is consistent with the intent of the Minority Farm Register. These meeting are ongoing until the 2007 Census.

■ **Technology for Small Towns, Rural Areas, Limited Resource Farmers, Community Groups, and Tribal Communities:** In partnership with the General Services Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, Departments of Energy, Education, Treasury, Transportation, minority serving institutions and other partners provided over 500 used computers. Training and technical assistance was also provided to small towns, rural communities, and limited resource farmers and ranchers. This is an effort to help this target audience with computer literacy and internet-based applications for management, growth, and development.